PRIMA'S OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE

MECHWARRIOR® 3

STRATEGY FOR PREPARING, CONDUCTING, AND WINNING EVERY CAMPAIGN!

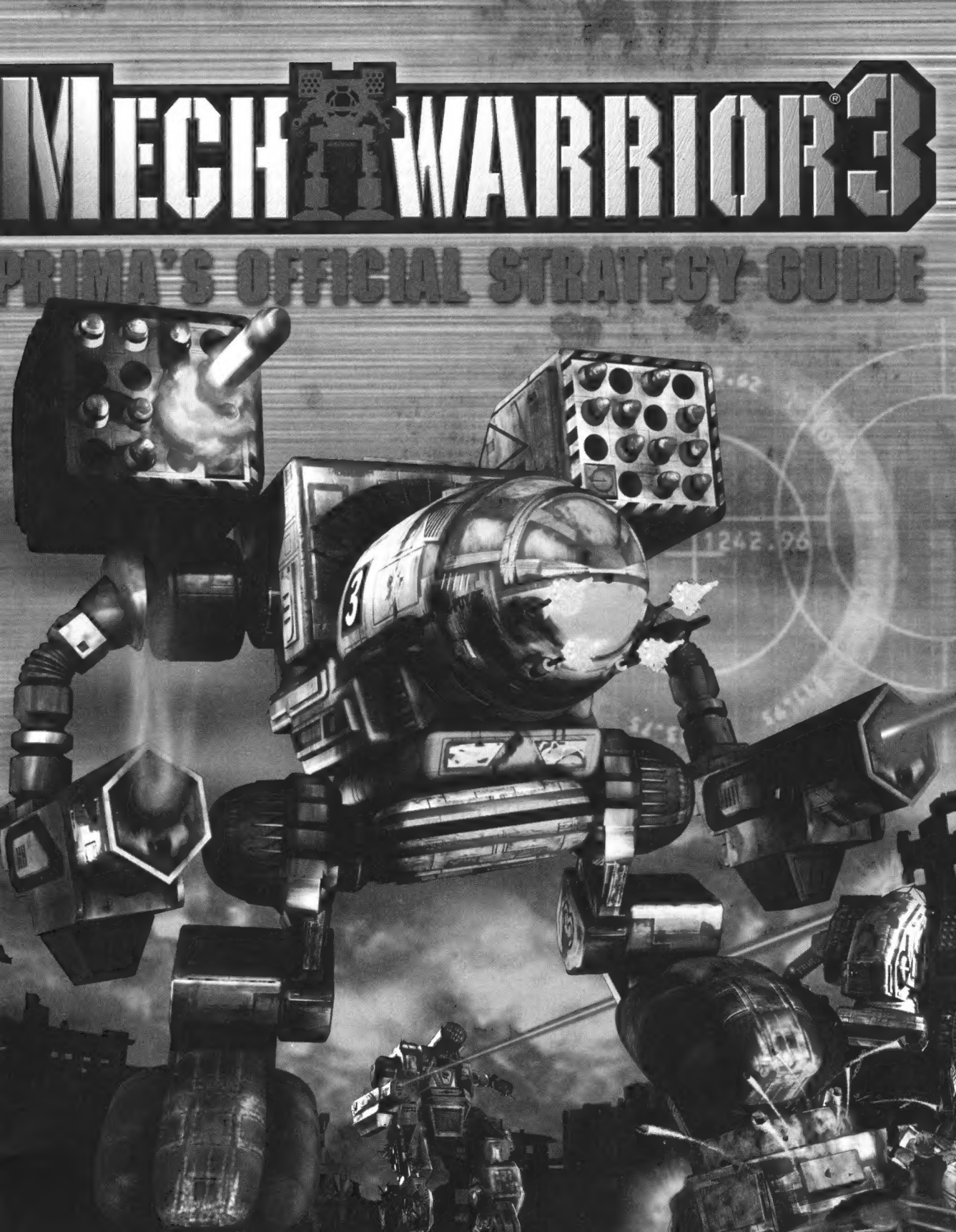
PRIMA® GAMES

MICROPROSE

Joe Grant Bell

MECHWARRIOR®3

PRIMA'S OFFICIAL STRATEGY GUIDE



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FOREWORD

Webster's Modern Dictionary–New and Revised 3058 Edition
(with multi-planet slang)

MechWarrior® *n* 1. (IS & Clan) A male or female pilot of the 30-foot-tall, walking, armored behemoths called BattleMechs®. These pilots, of the most powerful vehicles that modern armies can field, are the elite within the military structures they serve. 2. *(IS & Clan)* A military rank. In the Inner Sphere, the most atomic level of organization is the Lance, which contains four MechWarriors, their BattleMechs, and the support staff to maintain and repair them. The five-MechWarrior Star is the equivalent Clan organization. 3. *(IS)* A title/position of nobility within the feudal structure of the Royal Houses of the Inner Sphere, often at the same level and used interchangeably with the title Knight. It connotes both oaths of loyalty to the Knight's liege-lord and a responsibility to the peasants that the Knight has been placed in charge of. Both the title MechWarrior/Knight and the powerful engine of war, the BattleMech, are often passed from one generation to the next via a combination of heredity and demonstrated ability. 4. *(Clan)* The title of those that have the superior genetic make-up and have proven themselves worthy via the right of combat to be members of the most elite caste within Clan society. *adj. (IS & Clan)* A term used to denote that an object or individual is elite, superior, or the best. *adj.* 5. *(IS & Clan)* To refer to something or someone as strong, powerful, or able to wield enormous power.

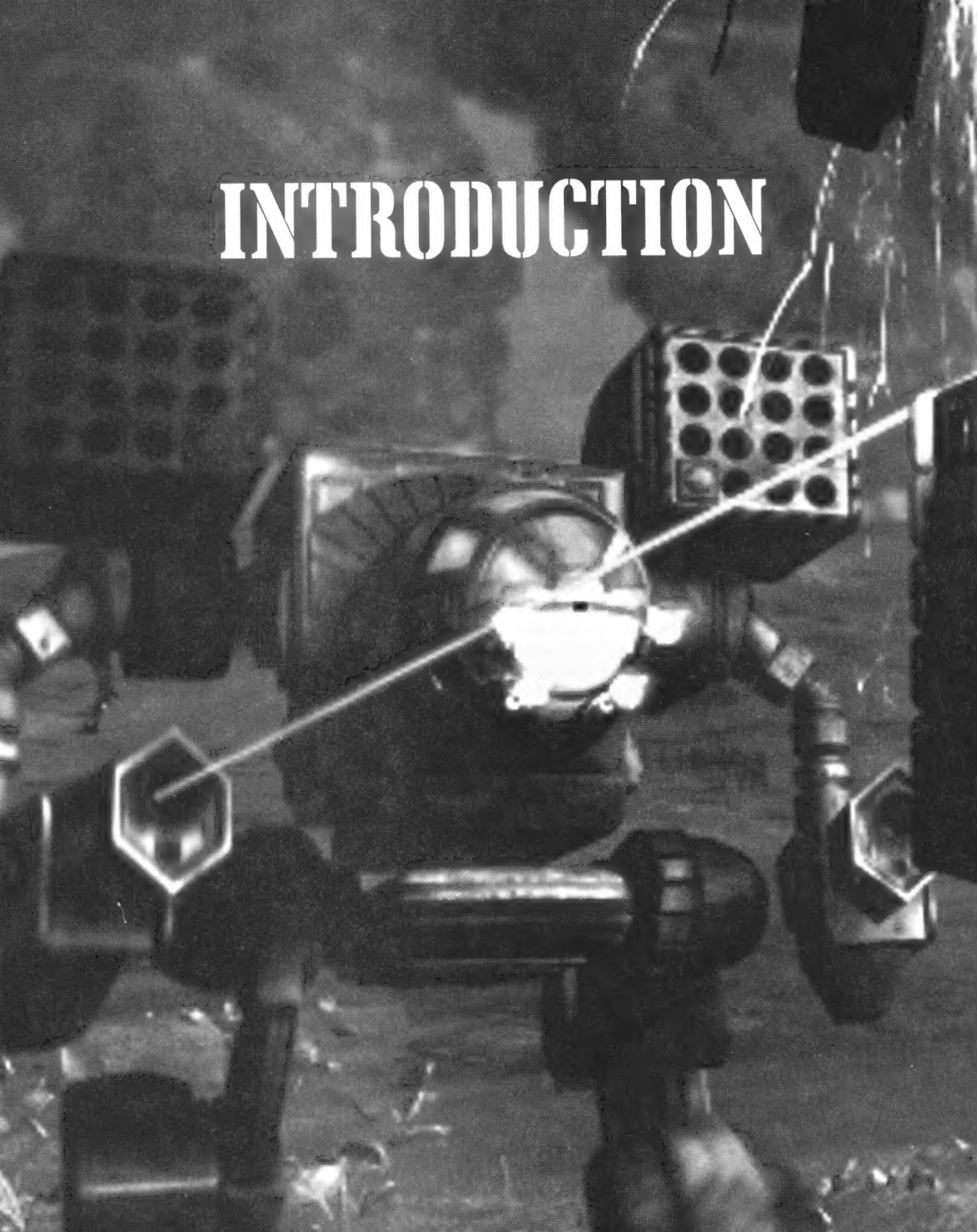
> **The definition of a MechWarrior is really much more then the dictionary states. A MechWarrior is flesh and blood, lust and logic, skill and good fortune. They are men and women who, via their talents and their courage, become the literal Knights in giant shining armor that children's myths are made of. Their adventures are the stuff of legends and ballads, their conquests events that we rejoice in, and their inevitable deaths occasions for our sorrow. Now in our darkest hour, we rely more then ever on those who wield terrible power, those who pilot the giant BattleMechs, the MechWarriors.**
>
> > ***–A quote from Omi Kurita, heir to House Kurita's throne, at the press conference in which representatives of the Inner Sphere first revealed the enormous secret battle force led by her father Theodore Kurita and Victor Davion had struck the Smoke Jaguar Clan's home-world (4/30/3061).***

Many of us have waited years to once again climb three stories into the sky and settle into the cockpit of the most powerful combat vehicle to ever set foot on a battlefield, and now, at long last, we can. From that cockpit we'll embark on an odyssey across a world rendered at a fidelity level that we could have only dreamed about 14 years ago when we first created the universe of *BattleTech*®. The rate of technological development over that period is itself a thing of science fiction and makes one believe that even such amazing things as 'Mechs® might actually be possible.

I would like to thank all people at Zipper Interactive, FASA Interactive, Microsoft, and MicroProse who contributed their talents and considerable efforts to bring *MechWarrior 3* to life. We all hope that you enjoy it and that this book enhances your exploration of the BattleTech Universe.

Now comes the time to find out if you fit the definition of a MechWarrior.

Jordan Weisman



INTRODUCTION

MechWarrior 3 takes place at a crucial juncture in the history of the Inner Sphere. As the war between the combined forces of the Inner Sphere and the invading Clans reaches a turning point, you find yourself right in the middle of the action, spearheading a commando operation to destroy the power base of an elusive Smoke Jaguar commander.

It's an exciting role—but as you'll soon discover, being a MechWarrior isn't an easy job. In addition to piloting a massive multi-ton fighting machine, the MechWarrior is often called upon to perform other roles as well: BattleMech Designer, Strategist, Tactician, Leader. None of these roles is particularly easy by itself. Combined, the demands can be overwhelming.

This book is a reference manual for the aspiring MechWarrior. It contains everything you need to know to carve your place in Inner Sphere history. Although it can't aim your Particle Projector Cannons or smite your enemies for you, it provides you with direction, so you can turn your ever-growing combat experiences into excellence on the battlefield.

This book's early chapters deal with general topics, such as the configuration of BattleMechs and vehicles, the capabilities of various weapons, and the tactics and techniques you'll use commonly in battle. They also provide general principles that you can apply to both the single-player campaign and multiplayer battles.

Later chapters deal with specifics, walking you through the various campaign missions in detail and showing you exactly what to expect. These chapters will suggest 'Mech configurations and strategies that are specific to each mission, giving you an extra edge in your quest to defeat the Smoke Jaguars once and for all.

Remember that there's no substitute for combat experience—but the more you read, the easier it'll be to translate your experiences into enhanced combat skills.

PART I

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO 'MECH PILOTING

PILOTING A 60-TON BATTLEMECH isn't an easy task. What's more, during the course of *MechWarrior 3*, you'll be expected not only to pilot a BattleMech through dangerous situations, but also to follow complex orders that can change over the course of the mission. In addition to controlling your own 'Mech, you'll find yourself leading a variable number of lance-mates and Mobile Field Bases as you proceed through various tactical operations. It's not an easy job!

This chapter gives you an overview of the difficulties you'll face, and also gives you a sense of the skills you'll need to succeed. *MechWarrior 3* isn't a simple game of running and shooting; it's a complex simulation consisting of many distinct elements. Figuring out which elements to focus on, and how to improve your performance in each element, is key to mastering the game. Read on to learn more.

OVERVIEW OF A MISSION

The single-player campaign consists of several distinct operations, which are themselves broken down into individual missions. You'll progress through these missions in a linear fashion, facing new challenges at each step and trying to incorporate the new 'Mechs, weapons, and MechWarriors gained from previous missions into your plan of attack.

Here's a look at the main stages of a mission.

BRIEFING

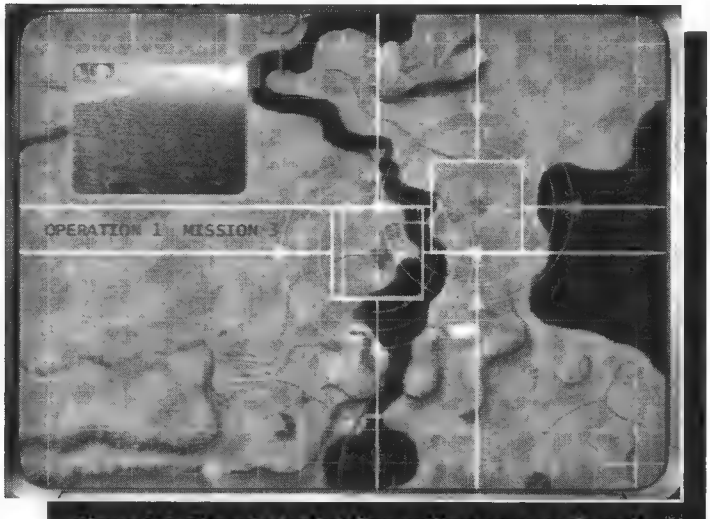


Figure 1-1. The mission briefing outlines your goals and warns you of potential threats.

First comes the mission briefing. The briefing consists of both an audio voice-over explaining your mission goals, and a map displaying the terrain on which you'll be fighting. Video clips or pictures of key targets are also common features of the briefing.

If you view the briefing as a mere formality that you must endure before the action starts, you'll

probably have a difficult time executing your goals. The briefing gives you valuable information on the terrain you'll be facing, the enemies you'll likely encounter, and the goals you must achieve to succeed. Ignoring this information is a dangerous proposition.

Even though you need to pay close attention to the mission briefing, be aware that it's seldom if ever complete. The primary targets and major terrain features are almost always accurate, but the briefing seldom prepares you for every enemy you'll encounter. Your commanders don't have access to complete enough military intelligence for that; you'll have to prepare for a few surprises.

THE 'MECH LAB

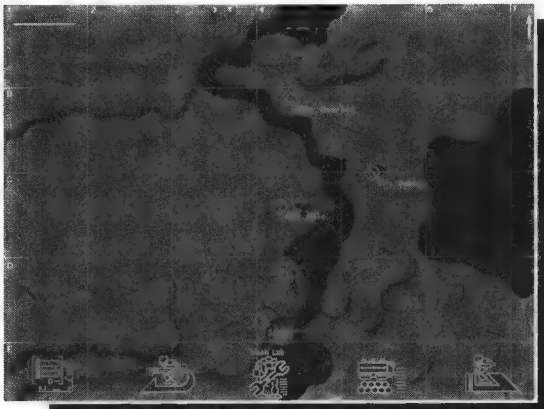


Figure 1-2. Clicking on the middle icon (the one with the wrench) takes you to the 'Mech Lab.

After viewing the mission briefing, you'll want to customize your BattleMech, plus the BattleMechs of any lancemates that will accompany you on your mission. This is an extremely important facet of the game—in fact, building a 'Mech that suits your fighting style is every bit as important as learning good combat skills. 'Mechs with an unwieldy set of weapons, 'Mechs without enough armor and defensive gear, and 'Mechs without enough heat sinks are all examples of problems than may occur if you don't design your BattleMechs with care.

Figure 1-3. The 'Mech Lab allows you to change details like weapons and equipment, and also modify big features like armor and engine type.

ACTION

Figure 1-4. After launch, you're dropped into the battlefield.

After customizing your 'Mechs, you're ready to launch. You're placed on the battlefield; it's now time to put your plans into action and accomplish your goals. This is what you've been preparing for!

There are several keys to succeeding in the mission itself, all of which are discussed later in this chapter.

SALVAGE ALLOCATION

Figure 1-5. Allocating salvage is easy in early missions, but more difficult in later missions, when you won't have room for everything.

TIP

Choosing which salvage to keep is easier if you pay close attention to the weapons and 'Mechs you enjoy using, and make a mental note of those you dislike. Try to be critical as you try out new 'Mechs and weapons, so you can discard whatever you dislike when the time comes to choose.

After the mission ends, hopefully in victory, it's off to the next mission. But before you jump into the next mission, you'll have to decide which 'Mechs and gear salvaged from the completed mission you'll stow in your Mobile Field Bases and take with you. You'll need to choose because there's limited space and tonnage in the MFBs. You won't have to make many decisions in the early missions (when you won't have much salvage), but this process becomes more involved later on, when you've collected a vast amount of gear. Then, you may find yourself faced with some genuinely tough decisions.

SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

There are many skills that will help make you a better MechWarrior. Here's a look at some of the most crucial. (All of these skills are discussed at length later in this book.)

UNDERSTANDING YOUR GOALS

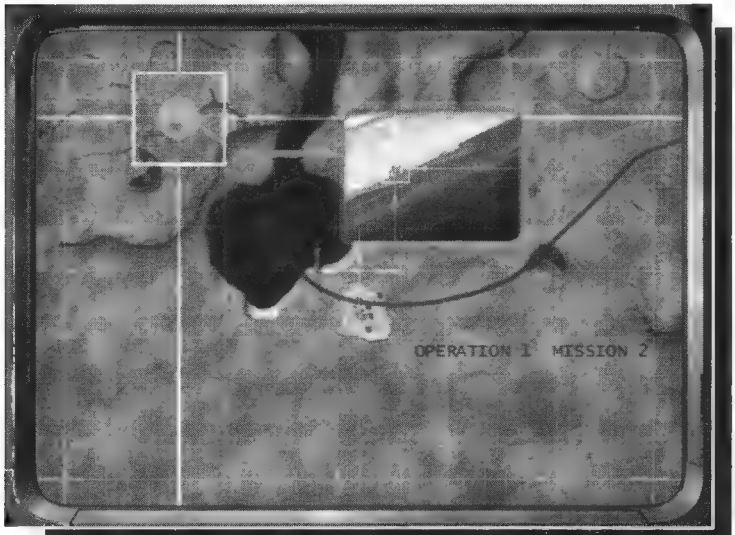


Figure 1-6. Paying close attention to the briefing is crucial to success.

The first key to success is understanding your goals. This often involves reading between the lines of the mission briefing. For example, if you need to take out a missile emplacement that only has a limited arc of fire, you'll probably want to approach the emplacement from a direction outside that arc. If you're supposed to stop a convoy that's heading from Point A to Point B, you might want to place your 'Mechs

somewhere between Points A and B and block the convoy's path, rather than just walking to Point A and then chasing the convoy as soon as it's spotted.

It's also important to remember that mission goals don't have to be completed in order. Sometimes it's best to attack a mission in the obvious fashion, proceeding from one navigation point to the next in sequence. In other missions, it doesn't really matter in what order you accomplish your goals. And in a few missions, it really pays off to accomplish your goals in reverse order. Be flexible enough to try alternate strategies, and you'll have an easier time accomplishing your goals.

BUILDING A BETTER 'MECH

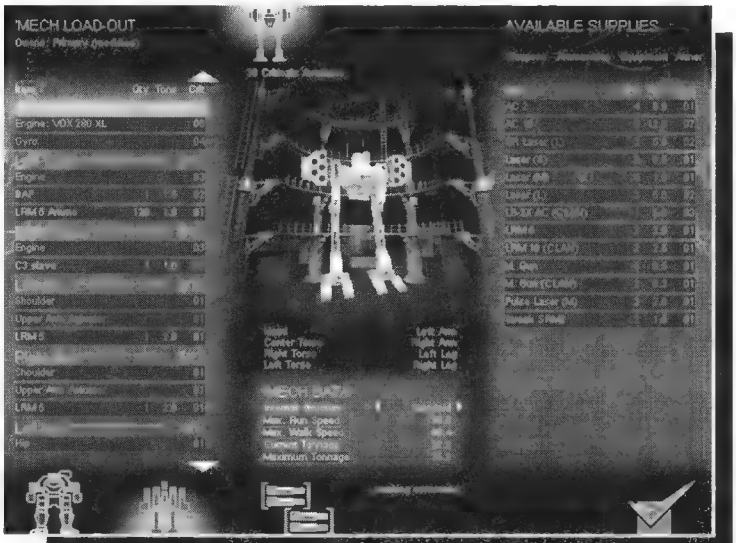


Figure 1-7. The 'Mech Lab is crucial. Plan to spend some time there.

Another key to success is building BattleMechs that are capable and combat-ready. There's a lot of room for creativity and personal decisions when customizing 'Mechs, but there are also a few rules that should never be broken—at least, not until you're experienced enough to know the full ramifications of what you're doing.

Chapter 4 is devoted to helping you build better 'Mechs.

IMPLEMENTING A PLAN

We've already touched on this concept briefly under "Understanding Your Goals," but it bears repeating: A plan is essential to every MechWarrior's success. Relying on raw combat skills alone won't get you very far. Just as important as the ability to gun down enemies are the abilities to make sound decisions, and

Figure 1-8. Having a solid plan of attack, not just good combat skills, is the key to victory.

approach enemies in a way that minimizes your risk. Charging headlong into a swarm of Smoke Jaguars is a surefire way to lose a 'Mech. You have to devise alternate ways of approaching groups of enemies, using tactics like baiting them into traps, distracting them with lancemates, and picking them slowly apart with long-range fire.

MODIFYING THE PLAN

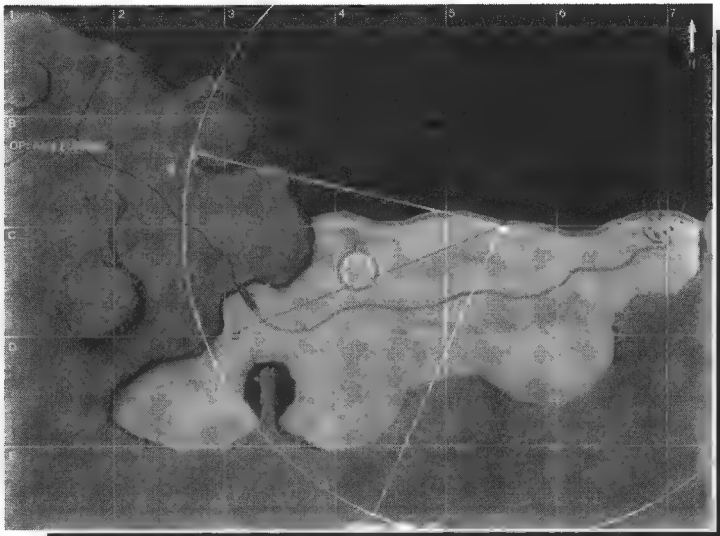


Figure 1-9. Don't be afraid to make changes to your plans, especially when the combat landscape changes—as when a new enemy appears.

No matter how good your plan is, you'll sometimes have to modify it. Sometimes something appears in mid-mission that makes you change your mind: An unexpected group of enemies guarding a mountain pass, for example, might convince you to take another, safer path. Sometimes you'll fail a mission outright, and you'll have to try it again. If that's the case,

you have to determine whether your plan is faulty and needs to be changed, or whether it's sound and you just have to execute it better next time.

TIP

Falling victim to a lucky shot or coming within an inch of your goals usually means that you just need to fight better next time. Getting overwhelmed usually indicates that a change of plans is necessary.

INCORPORATING NEW ASSETS

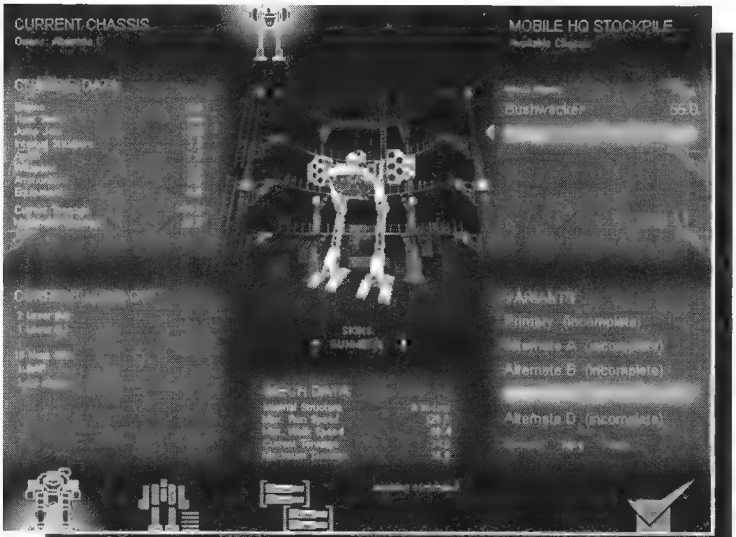


Figure 1-10. New 'Mechs like this Owens open up new possibilities.

A final skill is learning how to best integrate new MechWarriors, 'Mechs, weapons and equipment into your battle plans. This might seem like a simple matter of using the best 'Mechs and gear that you collect, but it's not always so simple. For example, you may collect a great new weapon but not enough ammo to fire it repeatedly. In this case you have to decide whether to use the weapon immediately or wait until you have more ammo for it. Decisions of this sort are common, and are discussed further in Chapter 4.

IMPROVING AS A MECHWARRIOR

Now that we've touched on some of the challenges that await you, and the skills you'll need to succeed, we'll finish with a few suggestions on how to actually develop those skills.

UNDERSTAND THE ENVIRONMENT

Figure 1-11. The battlefield is complex, but you'll gain a better sense of it with experience.

The first step toward improvement is developing a greater understanding of your environment. We're not talking about trees and flowers—instead, we're referring to the *combat* environment.

Understanding the combat environment is a big task, and it's never completely done. There's always some new nuance to learn. Experience is the best teacher. Pay attention as you accomplish your mission goals, taking careful note of subtle things like how quickly a particular enemy 'Mech can maneuver, where to aim when leading a running target, how many shots with your Pulse Laser it takes to destroy an APC ... the more you know about these things, the more you'll understand what you need to do to beat a mission.

This book is also a great resource for learning more about the combat environment. Chapter 2 gives you an overview of the weapons and systems you can load onto your 'Mech, while Chapter 3 gives details on the 'Mechs and vehicles you'll face on the battlefield. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 all point out certain truths about the combat environment (such as the fact that it's difficult to juggle multiple weapon groups, and that most battles naturally tend to move to medium-close range) that will help you to succeed.

IMPROVE YOUR COMBAT SKILLS

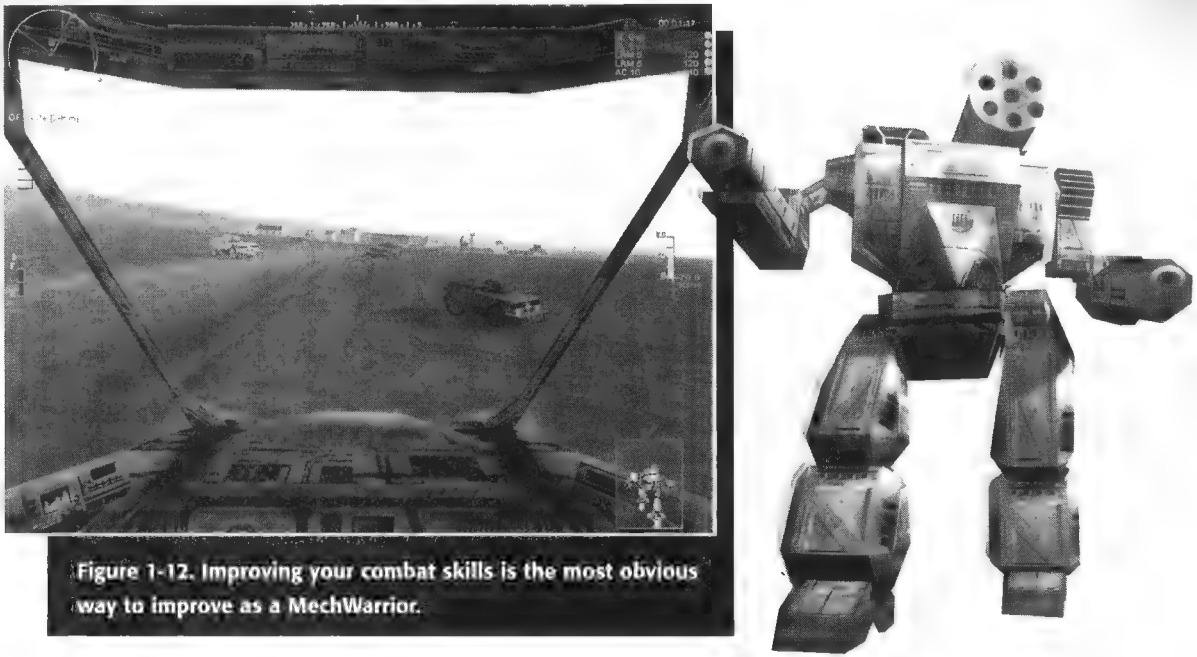


Figure 1-12. Improving your combat skills is the most obvious way to improve as a MechWarrior.

Perhaps the most obvious way to improve as a MechWarrior is to improve your combat skills. Improving in this area involves a number of things, including:

- Practicing until maneuvering your BattleMech is second nature
- Testing various weapons so you know how fast their projectiles are, and therefore, how much to lead a target
- Learning at what ranges to fire weapons
- Mastering your targeting controls, so you can quickly target the appropriate enemy
- Using systems like jump jets and coolant flushes in the midst of combat, without fumbling for the proper key

These are only a few of the skills you'll need to develop to improve your combat skills. They also happen to be skills in the purest sense—they're physical skills that you can only master with practice. But there's also another major component to improving your combat skills, and that's good decision making.

MAKE GOOD DECISIONS

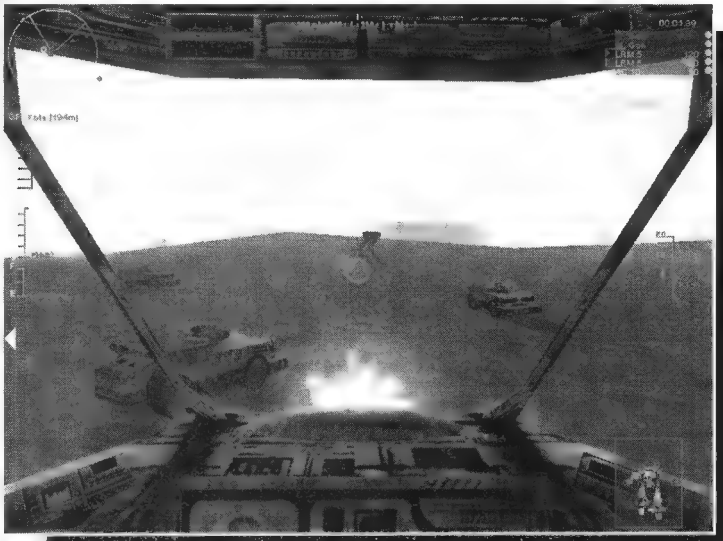


Figure 1-13. Stumbling into the midst of several Smoke Jaguars is usually the result of a poor decision.

The best MechWarriors aren't always the best shots or the most skillful pilots. Sometimes they're just extremely good at making successful combat decisions. They always try to enter combat when it's favorable to them, and back off when conditions aren't right.

As a MechWarrior, much of your decision making is geared toward minimizing damage to your 'Mech. You usually can't physically avoid your enemies, at least not throughout an entire mission. What you *can* do, however, is try to limit the number of enemies you face at one time. That allows you to concentrate on one foe at a time, and also gives you time to periodically retreat to your MFBs (Mobile Field Bases) for repairs. Chapters 5 and 6 explain this concept in detail, and Chapter 6 presents several tactics you can use to minimize the number of enemies you'll face at once.

USE THIS BOOK!

As we've already mentioned, this book is a valuable resource for the aspiring MechWarrior. Read it thoroughly to get helpful tips on every aspect of *MechWarrior 3*, as well as complete walkthroughs of every mission if you find yourself stuck.

MechWarrior 3 is a complex game, and there's no easy recipe for success. But by reading this book, you'll prepare yourself well for the challenges that lie ahead, and you'll avoid much of the confusion that normally confronts a novice MechWarrior.

CHAPTER 2
WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

THIS CHAPTER REVIEWS every weapon and piece of equipment you can load onto a 'Mech. You'll find factual information and suggestions for using weapons and equipment effectively, as well as suggestions on which items are most useful for the typical MechWarrior.

The first section of this chapter covers every weapon in detail. The second section covers equipment. The final section contains tables summarizing vital information on every weapon in the game.

WEAPONS

The weapons you can mount on a 'Mech fall into three broad categories: energy, ballistic, and missile. Each category has its own distinct characteristics. Energy weapons are light and portable, and there's no limit to how many times they can be fired, but they generate large amounts of heat. Ballistic weapons have limited ammunition and can be tricky to aim, but they generate minimal heat and deal excellent damage. Missile weapons also have limited ammunition, and the missiles can be shot down by 'Mechs equipped with an AMS (Anti-Missile System). However, missiles generate only moderate heat, they offer a good tonnage-to-damage ratio, and they home in on their target for greater accuracy.

TIP

Read carefully, and compare the statements in this chapter with your own personal assessment of weapons and equipment. Your unique style of piloting a 'Mech may cause you to value particular weapons and equipment more than we do, or dislike weapons and equipment that this chapter recommends.

ENERGY WEAPONS

Energy weapons are the weapons of choice for small- to medium-sized 'Mechs because of their relative lightness. They do generate large amounts of heat, but a MechWarrior that understand the limits of his 'Mech can keep this heat in check while reaping benefits from the many energy weapons packed on his BattleMech.

Energy weapons are also great for larger 'Mechs, especially when used in multiples. Because larger 'Mechs can pack on several Heat Sinks as well, it's possible for them to group-fire large clusters of energy weapons in rapid succession without suffering from excessive heat buildup.

Heat is the only significant downside of energy weapons—and although it's indeed significant, you'll enjoy the fact that energy weapons require no ammunition. This not only means you don't have to worry about running out, but you also don't have to worry about ammo explosions if enemy fire penetrates your 'Mech's armor.

SMALL LASER

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 0.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 120 meters

The Small Laser is an extremely light weapon with minimal range. It generates minimal heat. This combination of low heat and low tonnage makes the Small Laser a suitable weapon for small 'Mechs.

Larger 'Mechs can handle bigger and more potent weapons that aren't as range-restricted as the Small Laser. Occasionally you might have a free half-ton on a larger 'Mech that seems to be the perfect place for a Small Laser, but you should only add it if you have other short-range weapons that it can be suitably grouped with. After all, it'd be silly for your 80-ton BattleMech, armed with deadly ER-PPCs and devastating Autocannons, to ignore those weapons and fire a single Small Laser at the enemy; that's just a waste of time.

Small 'Mechs can benefit from Small Lasers—but again, you should only use them if you plan on fighting at close range. Small 'Mechs' main advantage is their speed and elusiveness, and fighting at very close range restricts that elusiveness; even enemies with poor aim can likely hit you at close range. If you plan to face other small 'Mechs and vehicles, however, a cluster of Small Lasers can give you excellent short-range punch.

MEDIUM LASER

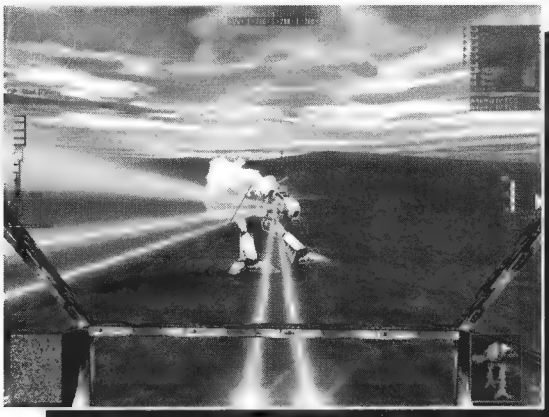


Figure 2-1. Large groups of Medium Lasers can deal excellent damage.

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 360 meters

The Medium Laser is the benchmark weapon by which all others are judged. It's one of the most efficient Inner Sphere weapons in existence; very few weapons weighing only one ton and taking up only one critical space can deal an equivalent amount of damage.

It's the compact nature of the Medium Laser that makes it most appealing, especially for smaller 'Mech designs. Because of the weapon's minimal tonnage, even a very small 'Mech can load several Medium Lasers onboard, and thus make itself a legitimate threat on the battlefield. Of course, very small 'Mechs tend not to have room for many heat sinks, which creates a problem when firing multiple lasers—but nevertheless, Medium Lasers rank among the very best weapons for providing both small and large 'Mechs with extra punch.

The Medium Laser also benefits from speed. Laser shots reach their target instantaneously, whereas projectiles such as Autocannon bursts take much longer to hit the mark. As a consequence, lasers are easier to aim than Autocannons and their ilk, especially over long distances; it's just a matter of aiming at the spot you want to hit. A 'Mech firing Autocannons, on the other hand, must lead the target.

The only major drawback of the Medium Laser, aside from its relatively mediocre effective range, is that it generates a good deal of heat. This heat is nothing when compared to the heat generated by, say, a Large ER Laser or an ER-PPC, but it's considerably more than the heat generated by projectile weapons like the Gauss Rifle. The Medium Laser is an excellent addition to most 'Mechs. It can be used in multiples as the main weapon system on small- to medium-sized 'Mechs that can't handle the weight of projectile weapons—but it's also useful on larger 'Mechs, especially when clustered in groups of six or more. It's also a good "filler" weapon, suitable for rounding out the payload of a 'Mech with a ton to spare.

LARGE LASER

Heat per Shot: 8
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 5
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: —
Range: 600 meters

The Large Laser has almost twice the effective range as the Medium Laser, and it deals more damage. However, the cost is steep: The Large Laser generates almost three times the heat as the Medium Laser, and weighs five times as much.

You'll always pay more in tonnage and/or heat to get a weapon with extra range, so the Large Laser can't be faulted for its excesses. Still, Large Lasers can't be piled onto small- or medium-sized 'Mechs indiscriminately, in the same way that Medium Lasers can. For medium-sized 'Mechs, you might want to use multiple smaller weapons as the main weapons system, then pack on a single Large Laser for extra punch, especially at medium-long range.

ER SMALL LASER (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 0.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 240 meters

The Clan's ER Small Laser makes a lot of sense for small- to mid-sized 'Mechs. It weighs less than a standard Medium Laser and generates less heat, yet it deals similar damage. On the downside, it also has a shorter effective range.

The Clan ER Small Laser won't put the Medium Laser out of business, as its range is short enough to occasionally be a problem. But you can pack these lasers on in mass quantities for an extremely potent close-range punch. Just watch the heat, as you can load on so many of these that you might find yourself in trouble despite the low heat value of individual weapons.

ER MEDIUM LASER (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 5
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 600 meters

The Clan's ER Medium Laser deals comparable damage to the "standard" (Inner Sphere) Medium Laser, but it features the same extended range of a Large Laser. It doesn't weigh any more than the standard Medium Laser, so you can pack on these weapons at will.

TIP

If you replace your Medium Lasers with the Clan's ER Medium Lasers, monitor yourself in combat to see if you're using their extra range effectively. If not, you might as well go back to the regular Medium Lasers, which generate less heat (so you can pack more of them on without as many heat worries).

The main downside of this weapon is its heat. It generates almost twice as much heat as a regular Medium Laser, despite dealing approximately the same amount of damage.

The ER Medium Laser is a great weapon to use as a mainstay if you have access to lots of heat sinks—preferably, double heat sinks. With enough heat sinks in place, you can enjoy a potent array of lasers and yet fight at fairly long range.

ER LARGE LASER

Figure 2-2. The ER Large Laser can fire at targets so far away that you can hardly see to aim at them.

Heat per Shot: 12
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 5
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: —
Range: 1,000 meters

The ER Large Laser is an excellent weapon for long-range sniping. It possesses the longest range of any available weapon, and because lasers fire instantaneously, you'll have a good chance of actually hitting your target at those extended ranges.

This range, however, comes at a price of high heat. The ER Large Laser weighs no more than a regular Large Laser, but it generates 150 percent of the heat. This means you can't just lump in an ER Large Laser with your main laser group and use it indiscriminately; in most 'Mechs, this will lead to critical heat levels in no time.

Take the ER Large Laser in missions where you think you'll need a legitimate long-range threat, either to take out stationary turrets or to harass the enemy. If you don't plan on making use of its great range, however, a regular Large Laser is a better choice.

ER LARGE LASER (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 12
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 4
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 1,000 meters

The Clan's variant of the ER Large Laser is identical to its standard (Inner Sphere) variant, save that it weighs a ton less. If you have access to this weapon, therefore, you should always use it instead of the standard ER Large Laser.

However, tonnage isn't the ER Large Laser's main problem—heat is. And this version doesn't rectify the massive amounts of heat the weapon generates. You still might want to hold off, therefore, unless your 'Mech will benefit from extremely long-range weapons and has enough heat sinks to cope with the heat.

TIP

An ER Large Laser could be a good sniping weapon for a light 'Mech geared entirely toward long-range combat. This 'Mech would have enough speed to escape heavier foes and maintain extremely long range during combat, and the ER Large Laser would allow it to snipe at enemies at ranges where few of their weapons could respond.

This 'Mech design would require a lot of discipline and aiming skill on the part of its pilot, and would require a wide-open battlefield to take full advantage of its weapons' range.

SMALL PULSE LASER

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 240 meters

The Small Pulse Laser, and pulse lasers in general, are a good alternative to regular lasers. Holding down the fire button results in a rapid-fire burst of laser blasts, allowing you to deal extra damage and relieving the pressure to hit with your first shot. Pulse lasers also let you deal just as must damage as you need to. If you destroy a target near the beginning of a firing sequence, you can just let up on the trigger and the weapon will recharge more quickly than if you had fired it until it was dry.

The Small Pulse Laser is a good alternative to other small lasers, featuring good damage and range for its class. However, bear in mind that small lasers of all descriptions suffer from lack of range and punch. You shouldn't expect Small Pulse Lasers to be a mainstay of your 'Mech's arsenal.

SMALL PULSE LASER (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 240 meters

The Clan variant of the Small Pulse Laser deals slightly more damage than the standard Inner Sphere variant but is otherwise much the same. If it's available, you should always use the Clan Small Pulse Laser instead of the standard model.

MEDIUM PULSE LASER

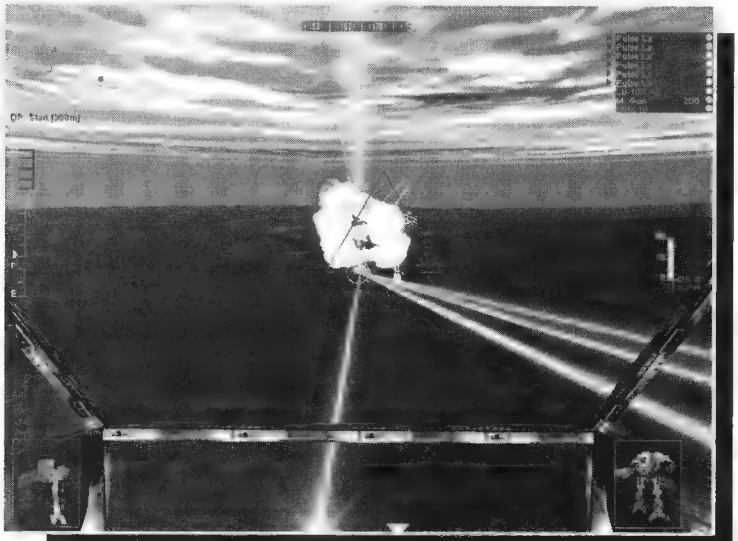


Figure 2-3. Medium Pulse Lasers fire rapidly if you hold down the trigger, generating large amounts of damage in a short period of time.

Heat per Shot: 4
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 2
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 480 meters

The Medium Pulse Laser is an excellent weapon to build a 'Mech around. It weighs twice as much as a regular Medium Laser, making it less suitable for the very

smallest 'Mechs; however, for only a bit more heat cost than a Medium Laser it can fire multiple shots, or pulses. Some MechWarriors might prefer to deal all their damage in one discrete burst, but Pulse Lasers' ability to fire multiple times reduces the pressure to hit with the first shot—a quality that most MechWarriors will probably appreciate. The extra damage is also a definite plus.

You'll find that 'Mechs using large batteries of Medium Pulse Lasers as their main combat weapon group are extremely efficient, especially in campaign missions. The Medium Pulse Laser's combination of decent range, good damage, and unlimited shots makes it an ideal mainstay weapon.

MEDIUM PULSE LASER (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 4
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 2
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 480 meters

The Clan's variant of the Medium Pulse Laser is much the same as the Inner Sphere version, but it deals slightly more damage. Use it whenever possible, but realize that it's very similar to the Inner Sphere variant.

LARGE PULSE LASER

Heat per Shot: 10
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 7
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: —
Range: 800 meters

The Large Pulse Laser falls squarely in between the Large Laser and Large ER Laser in terms of heat generation. It runs hotter than a Large Laser but not as hot as the Large ER Laser. It does, however, weigh more than both of them.

The Large Pulse Laser is an excellent weapon with excellent range. It's not suitable for 'Mechs without multiple heat sinks, as it does generate a good deal of heat, but it's otherwise very solid.

Ultimately, your preference for regular lasers or Pulse Lasers will dictate whether to load this weapon on board. If you like the multiple-shot style of Pulse Lasers, this weapon will give your Pulse Laser weapons group added range and punch. If you prefer single-shot weapons, a regular Large Laser might serve you better.

LARGE PULSE LASER (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 10
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 6
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: —
Range: 800 meters

The Clan variant of the Large Pulse Laser is fundamentally identical to the standard variant, save that it weighs a ton less. This makes it more attractive than the standard variant, which is the heaviest laser you can load onto a 'Mech. Use it instead of the standard Large Pulse Laser whenever possible.

ER-PPC

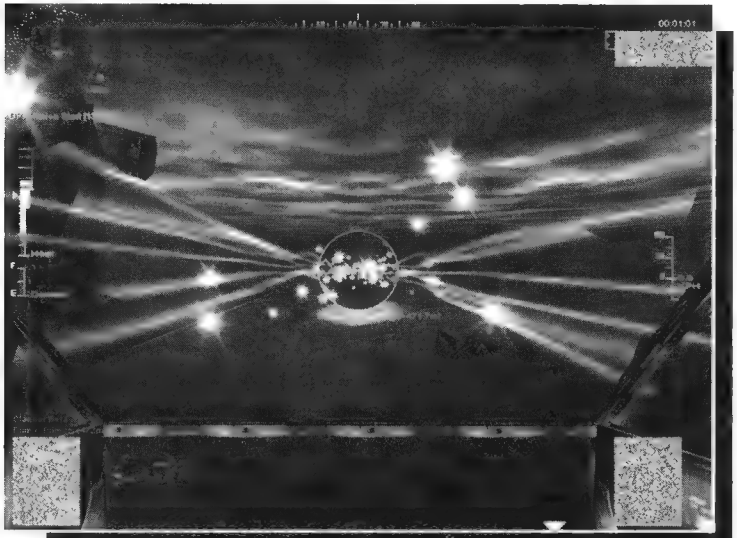


Figure 2-4. ER-PPCs are extremely potent, and effective at extreme range.

Heat per Shot: 15
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 7
Critical Spaces: 3
Ammo: —
Range: 920 meters

The ER-PPC is a tricky beast to manage, but its great upside makes it intriguing to most MechWarriors. It deals extreme damage at extreme range, much like a Gauss Rifle, but its

weight is less than half that of a Gauss Rifle and it takes up less than half as much space. It also can fire an unlimited number of times, unlike the ammo-intensive Gauss Rifle.

With all these upsides, one would expect a serious downside, and indeed, that's the case: The ER-PPC generates more heat than any other weapon in existence. The heat is such that firing a single ER-PPC twice in a row, quickly, will overheat and shut down a 'Mech without extra heat sinks. The weapon runs very hot.

Aiming the ER-PPC is comparable to aiming a Gauss Rifle. The projectile takes a short while to reach the target, so it's necessary to lead moving foes. Aiming the ER-PPC is a fine art, so you shouldn't expect to hit the mark on your first few tries—especially if you're taking advantage of the ER-PPC's excellent range and sniping at enemies 800 or more meters away.

The ER-PPC can be used on a light hit-and-run style 'Mech, though on such a 'Mech it would be a solo weapon—its heat would preclude use of other weapons simultaneously. Also, the MechWarrior would need to exercise discretion instead of firing indiscriminately, or else the 'Mech would constantly overheat.

Mainly, though, you should load ER-PPCs onto large 'Mechs, especially those with double heat sinks. 'Mechs with at least five or six double heat sinks (in addition to the base 10 heat sinks that come standard with every 'Mech) will be able to manage the heat of the ER-PPC, and perhaps even use twin ER-PPCs for a truly devastating long-range attack.

Never try to add an ER-PPC to a 'Mech without multiple heat sinks. It's a surefire recipe for disaster.

ER-PPC (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 15
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 6
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: —
Range: 920 meters

The Clan's take on the ER-PPC is very similar to the Inner Sphere's, save that it weighs a ton less and takes up one less critical space. You should therefore use the Clan model instead of the Inner Sphere model whenever possible. Bear in mind, though, that heat, not tonnage, is the main problem with the ER-PPC—and the Clan model doesn't improve the weapon in that area.

TIP

The ER-PPC is truly a two-faced weapon: It's excellent on a 'Mech with multiple double heat sinks, and a nightmare on a 'Mech with inadequate heat sinks. Use it under the right circumstances, and you'll be pleased.

FLAMER

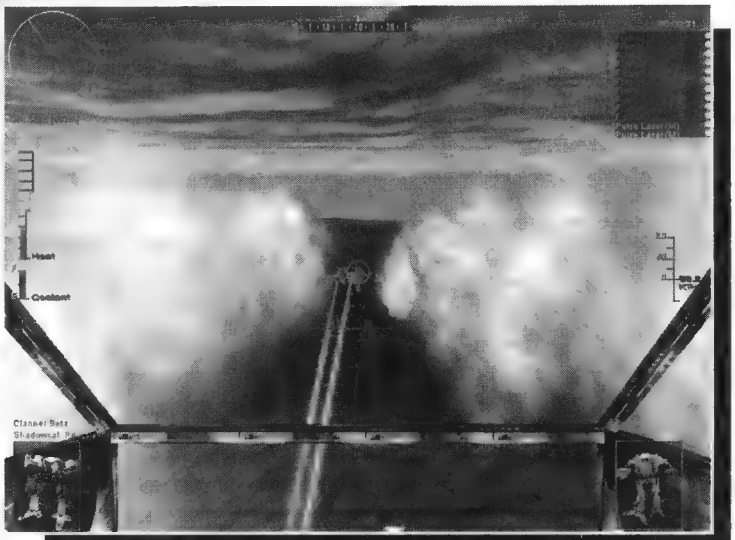


Figure 2-5. Flamers, when used in large groups, can be extremely potent.

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: Low (Heat)
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 120 meters

The Flamer is an intriguing and potentially devastating weapon. It's tough to use in small quantities because it has limited range, it generates lots of heat for its size, and it's hard to group with dissimilar weapons.

The Flamer shoots gouts of flame that travel rather slowly, so you'll have to practice aiming. A Targeting Computer can help, as can getting so close to the target that you simply can't miss. Also, because you can aim for the center of the enemy instead of individual limbs, you have more margin for error.

TIP

Flamers are a better idea in multiplayer games than in single-player.

One reason is that you often need weapons with decent range in the single-player campaign; you must achieve certain objectives, and in the course of achieving them you must sometimes cross terrain suited to long-range weapons.

Another is that you're unlikely to salvage enough Flamers to create a potent Flamer group, at least until quite late in the campaign. In multiplayer games, you can use as many Flamers as you want.

Finally, you want to *salvage* your enemies' 'Mechs in the single-player campaign. Destroying 'Mechs by overheating them, thus causing their engines to explode, makes it unlikely that there'll be anything left to salvage.

Flamers work not by damaging the target, but by heating it up. This makes it an all-or-nothing proposition. You have to heat up the enemy 'Mech enough to make it shut down or explode (due to excessive heat) to realize a tangible benefit from Flamers. This is why it's a bad idea to use only one or two Flamers; it's unlikely that you'll heat up the target enough to attain these results if you do. However, it's possible to either create a 'Mech based entirely around a large group of Flamers, or a 'Mech that uses a large group of Flamers as its main close-range attack. This 'Mech would have the potential to be devastating at close range. It would need lots of double heat sinks, though, to avoid overheating *itself* as it rapid-fired its large group of Flamers.

Just to give an example: A 'Mech with 10 double heat sinks and a group of 10 Flamers could approach a small 'Mech (say, an Owens) and destroy it with two quick group-fired Flamer shots. The heat would simply be too much for the Owens to bear.

To summarize, then, the Flamer can be devastating, but you need to use lots of them simultaneously, and you need a 'Mech that has lots of heat sinks.

FLAMER (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: Low (Heat)
Tonnage: 0.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: —
Range: 120 meters

The Clan Flamer is identical to the standard Flamer, save that it weighs half as much. Use it instead of the standard Flamer whenever possible.

BALLISTIC WEAPONS

Ballistic weapons have a number of obvious limitations. They require ammo, which tends to run out (and can even explode if the area it's stored in is shot). They weigh more than energy weapons that do comparable damage, especially when the weight of ammo is factored in. And the vast majority of them fire projectiles that, unlike the instantaneous bursts of laser beams, take a short while to reach the target. This means it's harder to hit an enemy with them than with lasers, because the shooter has to lead the target.

With this long list of downsides, you may wonder what the point of these weapons is. The main assets of ballistic weapons are the lack of heat generated by their shots, and the possibility of massive damage when you use heavy ballistic weapons like the Gauss Rifle and larger Autocannons. Particularly in multiplayer games, the massive damage dealt by large ballistic weapons can be devastating.

GAUSS RIFLE

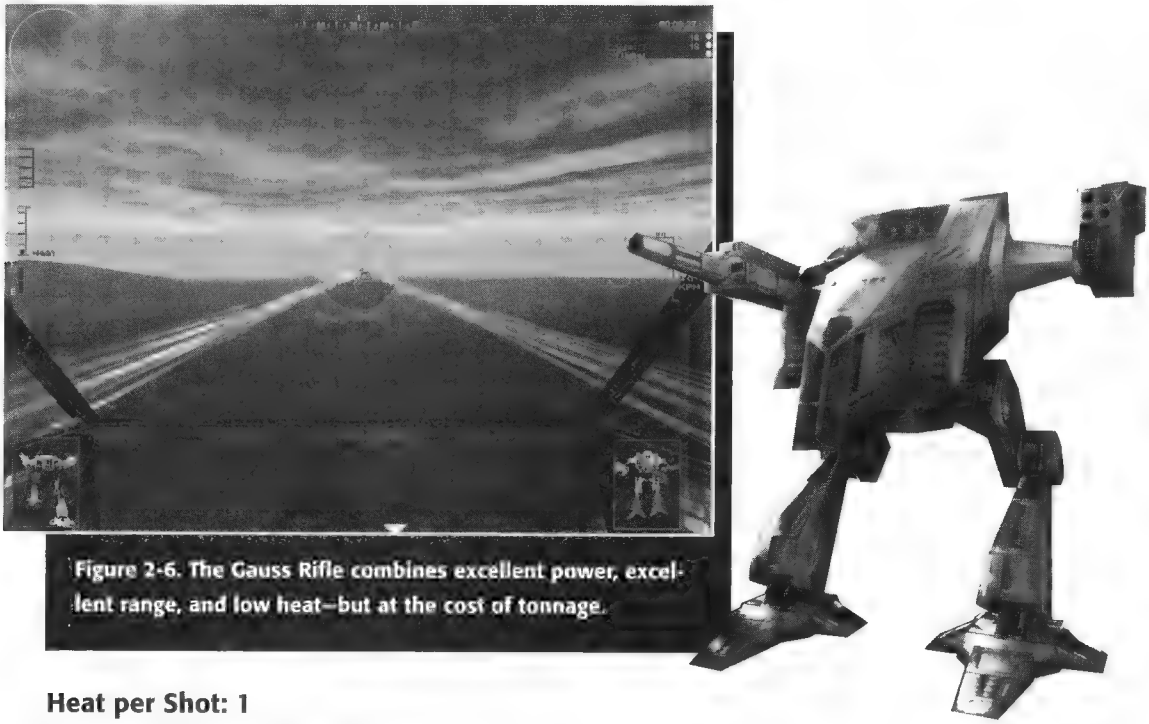


Figure 2-6. The Gauss Rifle combines excellent power, excellent range, and low heat—but at the cost of tonnage.

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 15
Critical Spaces: 7
Ammo: 8
Range: 880 meters

The Gauss Rifle is a highly specialized weapon, suitable only for MechWarriors with a penchant for long-range gunnery and 'Mechs with tonnage to spare. Anyone without both need not apply.

The Gauss Rifle deals excellent damage at very long range, but there are other weapons (or clusters of smaller weapons) that will deal comparable damage at less range for much less tonnage. So if you plan to load a Gauss Rifle, be sure that you'll really use that range.

Similarly, you need a big 'Mech to effectively use a Gauss Rifle. At 15 tons it's the heaviest weapon you can load on a 'Mech, and you'll need to spend extra tonnage on ammo because you only get 8 shots per ton.

Finally, the Gauss Rifle requires good aim, because its projectile won't hit the mark instantaneously.

The Gauss Rifle *does* have a place if you're a good shot and you're piloting a big 'Mech with a big need for long-range power. It's best in 'Mechs that have absolutely no extra heat sinks, because it only generates a single heat unit per shot. For most 'Mechs, however, the Gauss Rifle's massive tonnage simply makes it too much to carry. Use this weapon under the circumstances described above and you'll have success; use it in other situations, and you're asking for trouble.

GAUSS RIFLE (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 12
Critical Spaces: 6
Ammo: 8
Range: 880 meters

The Clan's Gauss Rifle is almost identical to the Inner Sphere model, save for a fairly drastic reduction in weight and size. Weighing in a full three tons lighter than the standard Gauss Rifle, the Clan's Gauss Rifle is truly the superior weapon.

This reduction in weight doesn't alter the fact that the Gauss Rifle is still fairly specialized, and should only be loaded on large 'Mechs with relatively few heat sinks. But it does make the Gauss Rifle a much sweeter deal for those 'Mechs that fit the criteria.

AUTOCANNON 2

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 6
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 45
Range: 720 meters

Though some may swear by the virtues of small Autocannons, we admit that he's not fond of them. Consider the Autocannon 2: True, it produces minimal heat and has very good range, but at six tons it's one of the heaviest low-damage weapons in existence. Add in a ton of ammo for good measure, and you've got a seven-ton weapon that simply isn't that damaging. No matter how you slice it, those seven tons can be spent in better ways.

Compare the minimal damage done by a lone Autocannon 2 to the *seven* Clan ER Medium Lasers that could be loaded on a 'Mech for the same weight. The ER Medium Lasers deal more damage *individually* than the Autocannon 2; together, they can be group-fired for a devastating knockout punch. They'll generate a lot of heat, true, but if you pack on enough heat sinks you'll have a formidable 'Mech with almost as much range as a 'Mech packing the Autocannon 2. The Autocannon 2, on the other hand, is far from formidable. It's recommended that you avoid it.

AUTOCANNON 5

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 8
Critical Spaces: 4
Ammo: 20
Range: 600 meters

The Autocannon 5 is arguably a better deal than the Autocannon 2. It deals good damage at good range for only moderately more tonnage than an Autocannon 2—but then again, eight tons (plus more for ammo) is a massive tonnage investment for a single weapon that deals only moderate damage and is relatively difficult to aim.

Again, avoid small Autocannons. Feel free to experiment with them yourself, but we would use the tonnage to load up on energy weapons and group-fire them for massive damage.

AUTOCANNON 10

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 12
Critical Spaces: 7
Ammo: 10
Range: 450 meters

The Autocannon 10 continues the Autocannon family's tradition of ballistic weapons that generate very little heat, and unlike the smaller Autocannons, the Autocannon 10 does pack a heavy punch. However, with an effective range of only 450 meters, this weapon sacrifices some of the range that characterizes the lighter Autocannons. The only real benefit you're getting in exchange for the weapon's large tonnage, therefore, is the low heat. A Large Laser weighs less than half as much, deals comparable damage, and has a longer effective range.

If you're piloting a 'Mech that requires weapons with low heat, the Autocannon 10 can be a decent choice. However, there's no getting around its hefty weight. It's low on our list of priorities.

AUTOCANNON 20

Heat per Shot: 7
Maximum Damage: Extreme
Tonnage: 14
Critical Spaces: 10
Ammo: 5
Range: 270 meters

The Autocannon 20 is an unwieldy beast that weighs almost as much as a Gauss Rifle and has very poor range. Worse, its ammo per ton—a mere five shots—is laughable.

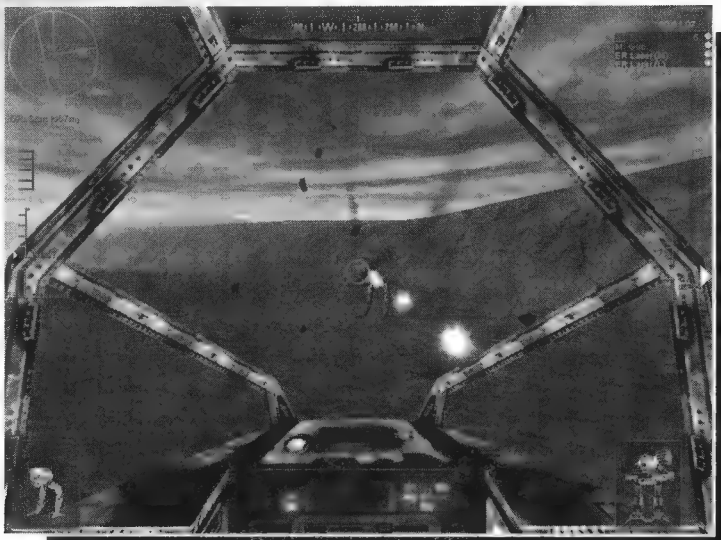


Figure 2-7. Autocannon 20s deal massive damage at short range.

Still, the Autocannon 20 has one saving grace: Pure, raw power. No other weapon can deliver the same amount of concentrated damage as an Autocannon 20, save for certain Clan versions of the Autocannon 20. Autocannon 20s are in a class by themselves. Also, though the weapon generates a good deal of heat, it's nothing when compared to the heat generated by the heaviest-hitting energy weapons.

The Autocannon 20 has a place on heavy 'Mechs that need extreme power at close range. The Autocannon 20 is arguably more useful in multiplayer games than in the single-player campaign, because you need instant stopping power when dealing with tough human enemies.

The Autocannon 20 takes up a lot of tonnage, but if you're committed to it as a main weapon system, it can pay off. Don't try to load it on small 'Mechs, as they can't handle the tonnage.

Also, be sure to add more than one ton of ammo. Even if you're planning on frequent visits to your MFBs, you'll frequently run out of ammo during combat if you take only one or two tons' worth.

Finally, if you're serious about an Autocannon 20, also consider the LB-20X Autocannon and the Ultra Autocannon 20. They deliver comparable damage to this weapon, but feature better range and take up less tonnage. They're superior to this weapon, so this weapon should only be used if you want a heavy Autocannon but don't have access to the better models.

TIP

It's theoretically possible to load this weapon on a Medium 'Mech, and then use that 'Mech as a close-range bruiser in multiplayer games. Your 'Mechs usually need weapons with better range in the campaign game, however.

LB-2X AUTOCANNON (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 5
Critical Spaces: 3
Ammo: 45
Range: 870 meters

If you decide that you want to give small Autocannons a chance, you'll get more mileage out of the Clan's LB-2X than the Autocannon 2. It weighs a ton less than the Autocannon 2 and has a slightly better range, though it does take up more critical spaces. The net effect is to make it a more efficient weapon.

The LB-X series of Autocannons is designed to fire ammo that fragments into multiple pieces, giving it more of a chance to damage critical internal components. This makes is slightly more likely to damage a 'Mech's vital systems once armor has been peeled away from a particular area, but slightly less effective at getting rid of armor in the first place.

LB-5X AUTOCANNON (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 7
Critical Spaces: 4
Ammo: 20
Range: 690 meters

The LB-5X weighs a ton less than the Autocannon 5 and has slightly better range as well. Take it instead of the Autocannon 5 if it's available.

LB-10X AUTOCANNON

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 11
Critical Spaces: 6
Ammo: 10
Range: 520 meters

The LB-10X carries on the LB-X tradition of dealing comparable damage to standard Autocannons of the same size, but with somewhat better range and at slightly less tonnage. This model also generates less heat and takes up fewer critical spaces than its standard counterpart, the Autocannon 10. This makes it an improvement over the Autocannon 10 in almost every conceivable way.

LB-10X AUTOCANNON (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 10
Critical Spaces: 5
Ammo: 10
Range: 520 meters

The Clan's variant of the LB-10X Autocannon is a marked improvement over the standard LB-10X, which is itself a great improvement over a standard Autocannon 10. It weighs a ton less than the standard LB-10X and takes up one less critical space as well.

If you want to carry an Autocannon of this size, and you can choose from any model you'd like, you should either take this model or the Ultra Autocannon 10. These are the most efficient designs.

LB-20X AUTOCANNON (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 6
Maximum Damage: Extreme
Tonnage: 12
Critical Spaces: 9
Ammo: 5
Range: 330 meters

The LB-20X improves on many of the powerful but inefficient Autocannon 20's shortcomings. It weighs two tons less, takes up one less critical space, and has significantly better range than an Autocannon 20. It also generates slightly less heat.

These improvements don't change the fact that Autocannons of this size are massive beasts, so don't plan on loading an LB-20X onto your Firefly anytime soon. But the extra efficiency afforded by the LB-20X goes a long way toward making heavy Autocannons practical for 'Mechs in the 60-70 ton range.

Obviously, if you have a choice between a standard Autocannon 20 and this weapon, pick this one.

ULTRA AUTOCANNON 2 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 5
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: 45
Range: 810 meters

The Ultra Autocannon family seeks to concentrate damage rather than spread it out. These weapons seek to devastate a single part of a 'Mech rather than spread out the damage as an LB-X Autocannon would. Because concentrated damage is generally a good thing in *MechWarrior III*, Ultra Autocannons are powerful indeed.

The Clan Ultra Autocannon 2 is more efficient in terms of both tonnage and range than a standard Autocannon 2. It has more range as well. When compared with an LB-2X Autocannon, another close relative, the Ultra Autocannon 2 isn't clearly better or worse. It has slightly less range than the LB-2X but it also takes up one less critical space.

The bottom line is that if you want to use Autocannons of this size, make it this one or the LB-2X.

ULTRA AUTOCANNON 5

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 9
Critical Spaces: 5
Ammo: 20
Range: 630 meters

The Ultra Autocannon 5 isn't a particularly efficient weapon. It has fractionally better range than the standard Autocannon 5, but at the cost of more tonnage and space. Neither weapon is particularly recommended, but of the two, the standard Autocannon 5 is probably a better bet.

ULTRA AUTOCANNON 5 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 1
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 7
Critical Spaces: 3
Ammo: 20
Range: 630 meters

The Clan's version of the Ultra Autocannon 5 is far superior to the standard version. It features significantly reduced tonnage and bulkiness.

If you're going to use an Autocannon of this size, this one and the LB-5X Autocannon are your best bets. This weapon has slightly less range than the LB-5X but more concentrated punch, and it takes up one less critical space.

ULTRA AUTOCANNON 10 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 10
Critical Spaces: 4
Ammo: 10
Range: 540 meters

The Ultra Autocannon 10's closest relative is the LB-10X Autocannon. The Ultra, however, is lighter, less bulky, and has fractionally better range. It also generates slightly more heat, but the overall heat production is so low that this shouldn't be an issue.

Of all Autocannons this size, we recommend this one.

ULTRA AUTOCANNON 20 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 7
Maximum Damage: Extreme
Tonnage: 12
Critical Spaces: 8
Ammo: 5
Range: 360 meters

The Ultra Autocannon 20 is very comparable to an LB-20X Autocannon. The Ultra is slightly less bulky and has slightly better range, but it also generates slightly more heat.

We would usually pick this Autocannon over the LB-20X, but both are extremely powerful close-range weapons. Both are also greatly superior to the standard Autocannon 20, which should be avoided in favor of the LB-20X or the Ultra if either is available.

MACHINE GUN

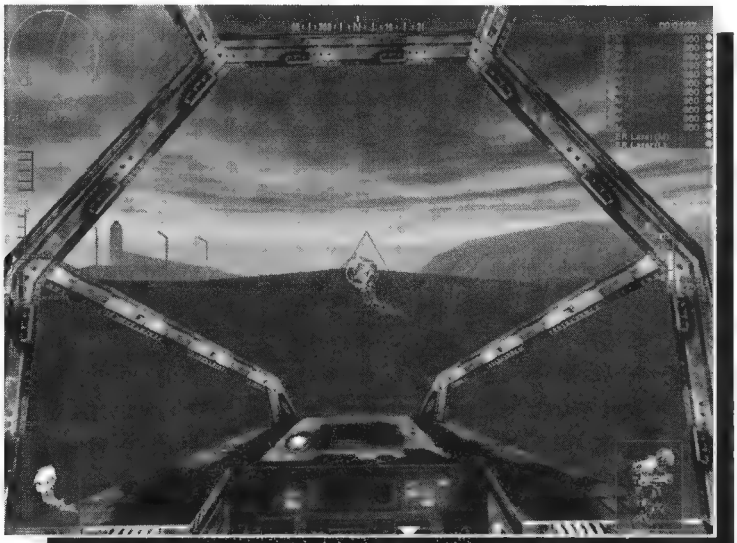


Figure 2-8. Machine Guns can be reasonably effective in large groups.

Heat per Shot: 0
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 0.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 200
Range: 120 meters

The Machine Gun is an unusual weapon. At only a half ton, its weight is hard to beat. This low weight suggests that it might be a good "filler" weapon, suitable for filling up that last half-ton on an otherwise loaded 'Mech. However, the fact that the Machine Gun needs to be fired continuously to be effective makes it unlike most other weapons, so it's hard to group with other weapons.

The other alternative is to load a huge group of Machine Guns—at least 10—onto your 'Mech. You'd need lots of Machine Gun ammo as well, but no heat sinks, because Machine Guns generate zero heat. This 'Mech would be quite effective in close-range duels if you group-fired all those Machine Guns simultaneously. However, it would have rotten range—so you'd only want to use it in multiplayer games, where you can control the range of fights more carefully than you can in the single-player campaign.

MACHINE GUN (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 0
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 0.25
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 200
Range: 120 meters

The Clan's take on the Machine Gun weighs about half as much as the standard Inner Sphere version. This allows you to pack on more Machine Guns, thus making the "Machine Gun 'Mech" described above even more effective.

For most 'Mechs, however, Machine Guns—Clan or not—are too specialized to be of much use.

TIP

This Machine Gun 'Mech could be fairly effective, but it'd never be a top-flight 'Mech. Its limited range and ammo would make it too vulnerable to long-range designs. Also, it'd require you to fight at such close range that you'd be practically guaranteed of taking heavy collateral damage.

An all-Flamer 'Mech would probably beat out an all-Machine Gun 'Mech.

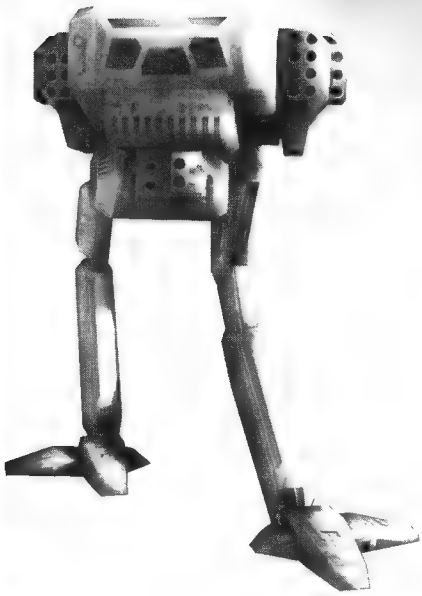
MISSILE WEAPONS

Missile weapons, like ballistic weapons, have a finite supply of ammunition. Individual missiles can be shot down with an Anti-Missile System, a fairly common form of defensive equipment.

Despite these drawbacks, missiles have several distinct advantages. They produce only moderate heat when fired, they weigh less than ballistic weapons that do comparable damage, and they home in on their target, ensuring good accuracy even at long range. Because of these advantages, missile weapons are a solid addition to any 'Mech, especially for MechWarriors with less-than-stellar aim.

LRM 5

Figure 2-9. LRMs are an effective way of damaging targets at long range.



Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 2
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 24
Range: 800 meters

Just as the Medium Laser is the benchmark energy weapon, the LRM 5 is the benchmark missile weapon. It's a small, compact missile rack that can be carried by even the smallest 'Mechs. By itself, an LRM 5 rack won't do much damage—but with repeated firings, or when paired with other LRM racks, it can damage or destroy enemies at long range.

Even if you enjoy short-range combat, you have to appreciate the value of damaging your foes from afar. Enemies that lack long-range capabilities will be powerless before your long-range assault. And those that do have missiles or long-range weapons of their own will at least have to respect your ability at that range.

Long-range weapons like the LRM 5 are particularly useful against vehicles and turrets. A swarm of APCs or Bulldogs could deal serious damage if allowed to get too close, but if you pick them off with LRMs before they enter their effective range, you'll emerge unscathed.

LRMs recycle quickly, so you can fire them quickly. They also generate fairly minimal heat, so you can fire multiple LRM 5s for quite awhile before driving your heat up to critical levels. Additionally, they home in on their targets, though extremely fast-moving foes can sometimes elude them. You can safely fire an LRM 5 at a target at medium to long range, and rest assured that—barring some tricky jump jetting, an intervening obstacle, or an Anti-Missile System—you'll achieve respectable accuracy.

Ultimately, LRMs' only downside is their limited ammunition (which isn't that bad, as you get 24 shots per ton of ammo) and the fact that they aren't as efficient in terms of damage-per-ton as certain other shorter-range weapons (like the Medium Laser). But that's the tradeoff; you always pay extra tonnage if you want a long-range weapon, and, at two tons, the LRM 5 is an excellent bargain.

LRM 5 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Medium
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 24
Range: 800 meters

The Clan's LRM 5 weighs exactly half as much as the standard LRM 5, but is otherwise identical. This is a great advantage that allows you to pack on a vast number of missile launchers—so use the Clan version whenever possible.

TIP

The number in an LRM's or SRM's name indicates the number of missiles fired simultaneously. An LRM 5 shoots five missiles at once, while an LRM 20 fires 20 missiles at once. Thus, the LRM 20 does four times the damage of an LRM 5. You'd need to pack on four LRM 5s to match an LRM 20's power.

LRM 10

Heat per Shot: 4
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 5
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: 12
Range: 800 meters

The LRM 10 isn't a particularly good deal. It fires twice as many missiles as an LRM 5, yet it weighs *more* than twice as much. In terms of efficiency, you'd be better off just using two LRM 5s and group-firing them.

If there's an advantage to the LRM 10, it's that the missile grouping may be a bit tighter than that of missiles fired from two LRM 5s, so you may achieve slightly more concentrated damage with the LRM 10. Also, there's sometimes merit to cutting down on clutter in your weapons groups by having one big weapon instead of two smaller ones.

The bottom line is that we would take two LRM 5s instead, but the overall difference is small.

LRM 10 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 4
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 2.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 12
Range: 800 meters

The Clan's LRM 10 weighs half as much, and takes up half as much critical space as the standard LRM 10. This makes it a highly efficient weapon. Of course, a pair of Clan LRM 5s is a bit more efficient than a Clan LRM 10, but both weapons systems are vastly superior to Inner Sphere designs because of their low weight.

LRM 15

Heat per Shot: 5
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 7
Critical Spaces: 3
Ammo: 8
Range: 800 meters

The LRM 15, like the LRM 10, is less efficient in terms of tonnage than LRM 5s equaling its damage. In other words, if you use three LRM 5s, you'll deal

TIP

If you look at LRM ammo per ton, you'll notice that you get 24 shots per ton of LRM 5 ammo, 12 shots per ton of LRM 10 ammo, 8 shots per ton of LRM 15 ammo, and 6 shots per ton of LRM 20 ammo. This might make it seem like the LRM 5, with its large number of shots per ton, seem like a good deal.

However, if you do the math, you'll see that there's really no difference in ammo. For example, let's say that you replace an LRM 20 with four LRM 5s. (Four LRM 5s deal the same damage as one LRM 20; see the tip under Clan LRM 5 for an explanation.) With one ton of ammo between these four LRM 5s, they can fire exactly six times, which is the same number of times an LRM 20 can fire with one ton of ammo. It all comes out equal in the end.

the same damage that an LRM 15 would, but you'll pay less in tonnage. This makes the LRM 15 appear to be a bad deal.

However, the weight inefficiency inherent in the LRM 15 is less than that of the weight-inefficient LRM 10. Also, the LRM 15 generates slightly less heat per shot than three group-fired LRM 5s. This counterbalances the weight inefficiency somewhat, and makes the LRM 15 an attractive alternative to multiple LRM 5s.

LRM 15 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 5
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 3.5
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: 8
Range: 800 meters

As is typical of Clan LRM systems, the Clan LRM 15 weighs only half that of its Inner Sphere cousin (the LRM 15). This makes it a great weapon for 'Mechs that want serious long-range punch.

LRM 20

Figure 2-10. The LRM 20 packs a heavy long-range punch.

Heat per Shot: 6
Maximum Damage: Extreme
Tonnage: 10
Critical Spaces: 5
Ammo: 6
Range: 800 meters

The LRM 20 deals excellent damage at long range. A single LRM 20 weighs more than four LRM 5s, which deal comparable damage. However, four LRM 5s will generate significantly

more heat (when group-fired) than a single LRM 20, so the LRM 20 is the better choice when heat is a concern.

Be sure to load more than one ton of ammo when using this weapon. As discussed in a tip earlier, the LRM 20 is no less ammo-efficient than other LRM designs—but you'll need at least two or three tons of ammo if you plan to use the LRM 20 very much.

LRM 20 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 6
Maximum Damage: Extreme
Tonnage: 5
Critical Spaces: 4
Ammo: 6
Range: 800 meters

The Clan's LRM 20, like other Clan LRM designs, weighs half as much as its Inner Sphere counterpart. This makes it an excellent weapon for 'Mechs that need long-range punch. A 'Mech sporting twin Clan LRM 20s and stocked with a good supply of missiles is a genuine long-range nightmare.

SRM 2

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 50
Range: 360 meters

SRMs, or Short Range Missiles, are potent close-range weapons. They require a steady aim to achieve an initial lock, but once they're locked-on, you can fire at will with a high degree of accuracy. SRMs home in on their target, but they have a limited turning rate—so if you fire *way* off the mark, the missiles are likely to miss.

If you plan on packing SRMs, you're advised to use them in multiples. This allows you to make them into their own potent weapons group. Also, you might want to use SRM 4s and SRM 6s if they're available. These larger SRM packs are slightly more heat-efficient than multiple SRM 2s.

SRM 2 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 0.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 50
Range: 360 meters

The Clan's SRM 2 weighs only half a ton, making it truly portable. Obviously, if you have the chance to use the Clan version instead of the standard version, you should do it.

SRM 4

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 2
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 25
Range: 360 meters

The SRM 4 launches twice as many missiles as the SRM 2, and therefore weighs twice as much. It only generates about 150 percent as much heat as an SRM 2, though, making it more efficient than a pair of SRM 2s (which would deal comparable damage).

The SRM 4 deals good damage by itself, though you should group fire it with other SRM launchers for a truly devastating short-range punch.

Feel free to incorporate groups of SRM 4s and SRM 6s in your 'Mech designs, especially if you like weapons that are easy to aim.

TIP

Another reason to group fire multiple SRMs is to overload enemies with AMSs (Anti-Missile Systems). The AMS won't be able to shoot down all your missiles if you fire them all at once.

SRM 4 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 25
Range: 360 meters

The Clan SRM 4 carries on the Clan's tradition of missile systems that are nearly identical to their Inner Sphere counterparts, save for the fact that their weight is halved. The Clan's SRM 4 fits this description perfectly, offering a potent missile launcher at half the tonnage of the standard SRM 4. This system is highly recommended.

SRM 6

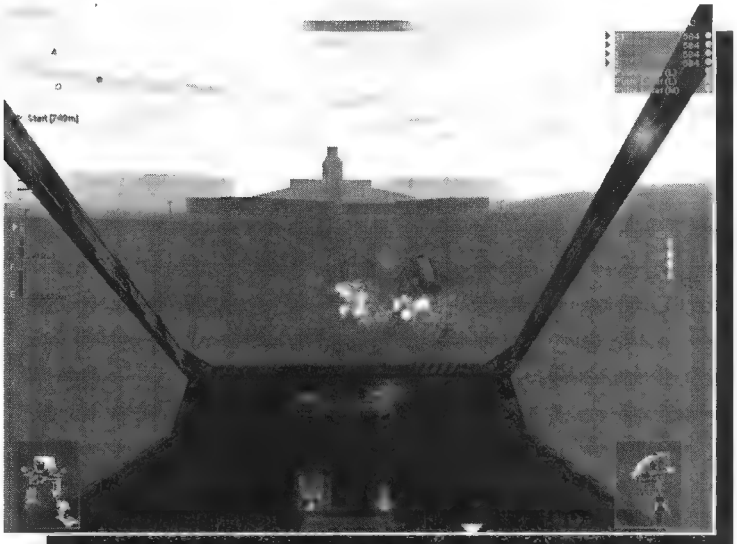


Figure 2-11. SRMs are potent short-range weapons. They generate less heat than lasers.

Heat per Shot: 4
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 3
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: 15
Range: 360 meters

The SRM 6 deals excellent damage at close range, offering easy-to-aim power at a reasonable tonnage cost. Use multiples for a truly devastating punch.

SRM 6 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 4
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 1.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 15
Range: 360 meters

As usual, this Clan system weighs only half as much as its standard counterpart, the SRM 6. Use it instead of the standard version whenever it's available.

STREAK SRM 2

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 1.5
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 50
Range: 480 meters

Streak SRMs are identical to common SRMs save for their increased homing ability. You'll have to wait for a missile lock before firing Streak SRMs, just as you would with regular SRMs, but the Streak SRMs' increased homing translates into greater accuracy when the lock is achieved.

The question often arises: Should you load regular SRMs or Streak SRMs onto your 'Mechs? Usually, Streak SRMs are better if you can get your hands on them. Their increased accuracy is handy, and they have better range to boot. Their only downside is their relatively high heat generation.

As for the Streak SRM 2, specifically, it's the least efficient of the Streak SRMs because it's not Clan-made. However, it still can be a useful weapon if other Streak models aren't available.

TIP

Comparing Streak SRMs to Clan SRMs is tricky. The Streak SRMs enjoy better accuracy and range, but the Clan's regular (non-Streak) SRMs are half the weight. If both are available, it usually comes down to a question of which is most important on a given 'Mech design: weight efficiency, or range and accuracy.

STREAK SRM 2 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 2
Maximum Damage: Low
Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 50
Range: 480 meters

The Clan's Streak SRM 2 is superior in distance to the standard SRM 2, plus, as a Streak weapon it enjoys better missile tracking. It isn't as weight-efficient as a Clan SRM 2, though, so you'll have to decide whether to go with the lighter Clan SRM 2 or the heavier but more accurate Clan Streak SRM 2.

STREAK SRM 4 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 3
Maximum Damage: High
Tonnage: 2
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 25
Range: 480 meters

The Clan Streak SRM 4 fires twice the missiles of the Clan Streak SRM 2, therefore doing double the damage. It also weighs twice as much, but it *doesn't* generate twice as much heat. This makes it more efficient than a pair of Streak SRM 2s, so if you're planning on loading on lots of missiles anyway, use Streak SRM 4s instead of Streak SRM 2s.

This heat efficiency is unusually good—the best of the Streak SRMs, in fact. If you can get away with using only Clan Streak SRM 4 systems, your 'Mech will stay cooler than it would if you'd loaded multiple Clan Streak SRM 2s or 6s.

STREAK SRM 6 (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 6
Maximum Damage: Very High
Tonnage: 3
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: 15
Range: 480 meters

The Clan Streak SRM 6 doesn't share the singular heat efficiency of the Clan Streak SRM 4, but it's not *inefficient*; it's no less efficient than the Clan Streak SRM 2 and is an excellent weapon system if the Clan Streak SRM 4 isn't available.

NARC

Figure 2-12. The NARC beacon must be fired, and must attach itself to the target, before missile accuracy is enhanced.

Heat per Shot: 0
Maximum Damage: —
Tonnage: 3
Critical Spaces: 2
Ammo: 6
Range: 1,000 meters

Not truly a weapon, the NARC missile beacon is nonetheless fired like one. Its statistics are listed here, but look in the following section on Equipment for more information on its capabilities.

NARC (CLAN)

Heat per Shot: 0
Maximum Damage: —
Tonnage: 2
Critical Spaces: 1
Ammo: 6
Range: 1,000 meters

The Clan's variant of the NARC is lighter and less bulky, but otherwise very similar.

EQUIPMENT

The following pages explain every piece of equipment that can be loaded onto a BattleMech. Read on for both factual information and suggestions on which equipment to use.

COMMON EQUIPMENT

The following pieces of equipment are either very commonly used, or *should* be commonly used. Heat sinks, CASE, and jump jets fall into the former category, as they're all relatively common. Anti-Missile Systems and the Targeting Computer are less common, but are highly recommended.

HEAT SINKS

Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1 (Standard and Clan singles), 2 (Clan doubles), or 3 (Standard doubles)

Heat sinks come in two distinct varieties, single and double. Both the Inner Sphere and the Clan make both varieties, so there are a total of four types to choose from (standard single, Clan single, standard double, and Clan double).
Heat sinks allow 'Mechs to dissipate heat more rapidly than they otherwise would. They don't prevent heat levels from spiking up in the first place, but they help you to avoid an automatic shutdown.

Every 'Mech has 10 heat sinks built into its engine, so you'll never see a 'Mech with less than 10 heat sinks. This baseline number of heat sinks is adequate for very small 'Mechs that won't be firing many weapons simultaneously, and for 'Mechs that specialize in low-heat ballistic and missile weapons. If energy weapons or lasers are going to be a major part of your 'Mech, however, you'd better add lots of extra heat sinks.

Double heat sinks take up extra critical spaces—but they're more than worth it. Use them whenever you can.

Heavy 'Mechs featuring energy-intensive weapons should load up on at least 10 extra heat sinks—doubles, if possible. You'll have to experiment, however, to

TIP

There's little weight and space difference between Clan and standard (Inner Sphere) heat sinks, but you can't load both on a 'Mech at once. If your 'Mech has Clan double heat sinks, for example, you can't add standard double heat sinks. Nor can you add either Clan or standard single heat sinks.

see how many heat sinks your favorite weapon configuration requires. Ideally, you should be able to fire your primary weapons group nonstop several times without worrying about shutting down.

JUMP JETS

Figure 2-13. Jump jets can take your 'Mech up to elevated locations, or can help you dodge enemy fire.

Tonnage: 0.5
Critical Spaces: 1

Jump jets add maneuverability to your 'Mech. The more jets you add, the more maneuverability you'll have. Experiment with various numbers of jets on different-sized 'Mechs to get a sense of their power.

The value of jets depends on the terrain. Rough, multi-level terrain can either require jump jets, or at least make them extremely useful. Smooth, level terrain limits the value of the jets.

The jump jet setting in the game's Options menu also affects jump jets' value. If "Relaxed Jump Jets" is selected, you have more options; if it isn't, you're more or less restricted to jumping vertically in the direction you're currently moving.

Jump jets have fuel that quickly runs out when they're in use. When the fuel is gone, the jets stop working. This isn't fuel in the traditional sense, though—it doesn't run out permanently. It just needs time to recharge. It's recommended that you wait until the fuel is fully recharged before initiating a jump, or you won't get very far.

You'll encounter both Clan and standard (Inner Sphere) varieties of jump jets. They're functionally identical, but you can't mix and match.

ANTI-MISSILE SYSTEM (AMS)

Tonnage: 0.5
Critical Spaces: 1

The Anti-Missile System is a small machine gun that automatically targets and shoots down incoming missiles. You can enable and disable it with the A key, but usually you just should leave it enabled.

An AMS can only handle so many missiles at once. It may, for example, gun down four of the six SRM 6 missiles that are headed toward it but miss the last two. The AMS is not foolproof, but by and large it does an excellent job of destroying missiles.

Because many enemies use missiles, and because any item that'll help save your skin (or at least your 'Mech's skin) is worthwhile, it's recommended that you load at least two AMS on all your 'Mechs. Three is probably optimal. With three functional AMS (only weighing in at 0.5 tons apiece) you can assure yourself of excellent protection from even huge volleys of missiles.

Take an AMS or three, and you'll usually be glad you did.

CASE

Tonnage: 0 (Clan), 0.5 (Standard)
Critical Spaces: 0 (Clan), 1 (Standard)

CASE, or Cellular Ammunition Storage Equipment, contains ammunition explosions. If you don't have CASE and your 'Mech's armor is breached, the ammunition for one of your weapons can detonate and take your whole 'Mech down with it. That's no fun. CASE restricts the ammo explosion so that it doesn't escape the area where the ammo was stored.

The Inner Sphere's CASE takes up weight and critical spaces, but the Clan's version of CASE is assumed to be built right into their 'Mechs, and hence it takes up no room at all.

If you only have the standard (Inner Sphere) version of CASE, then try to pack all your ammo into a specific body part and put CASE there to protect it. This helps keep you from adding more CASE than necessary. If you have access to the Clan version of CASE, you don't need to worry—just put it everywhere there's ammo.

Regardless of what CASE you use, however, you *should* use it—unless your 'Mech only has energy weapons, which require no ammunition.

TARGETING COMPUTER

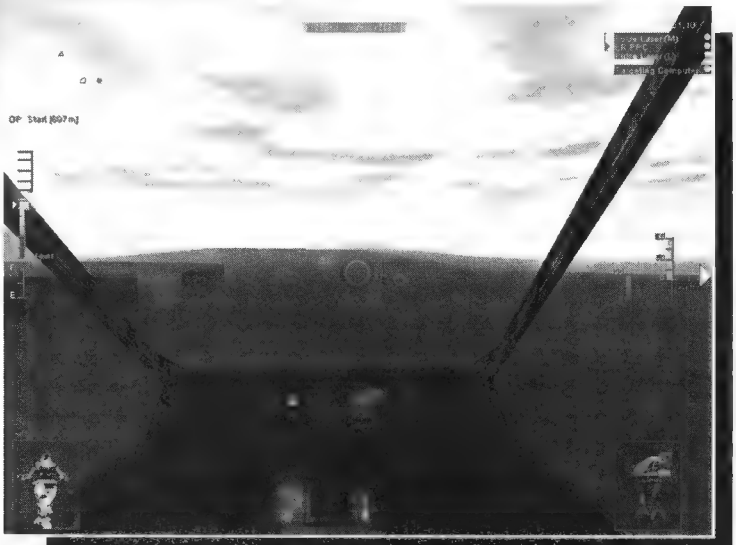


Figure 2-14. The small circle near the target is generated by the Targeting Computer.

Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1

The Targeting Computer draws a small circle on your HUD, showing you exactly where to aim your weapon to hit a targeted enemy. You can use the numeric keypad to target individual body parts, or ignore the keypad and simply target the 'Mech in general.

The Targeting Computer can be an incredibly useful addition to your 'Mech, or simply a waste of a ton, depending on how good your aim is and what sort of weapons you're packing.

If your 'Mech uses only lasers, the Targeting Computer will be more or less redundant. Lasers fire instantaneously, and they strike the exact point you aim at. Sure, the Targeting Computer can draw a little circle over the enemy, but you already know where to aim.

A Targeting Computer will help you if your 'Mech uses missile weapons. Usually, missiles can't be aimed at a particular body location—but if you use the Targeting Computer and the numeric keypad, you can aim them more precisely. This makes your missiles much more effective, allowing you to target the same body location that you're aiming your other weapons at.

Also, the Targeting Computer is extremely useful when you're using Autocannons or Gauss Rifles, or any weapon that fires projectiles that don't hit the mark instantaneously. It's particularly good at long range, where it can be extremely difficult to, say, hit a moving target at 800 meters with a Gauss Rifle.

The Targeting Computer isn't required, but it is recommended.

SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT

The following equipment is more specialized than the equipment already discussed. This isn't to say that it's of less value; in specific situations, some of this equipment can be of great benefit. But you need to pick and choose, using only equipment that'll benefit your current 'Mech or your current situation.

ARTEMIS IV FIRE CONTROL SYSTEM

Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1

The Artemis IV Fire Control System helps you attain missile locks faster. Also, any missiles you fire while you have the Artemis onboard will track their target more aggressively than usual, and they'll follow the terrain to some degree. The end result is that you can fire your missiles slightly faster and get slightly better accuracy.

Does the Artemis IV make a vast difference? No. Is it worthwhile? Probably, if your 'Mech design features lots of missiles. A split second shaved off your missile lock time, and the occasional bonus missile hit, will add up with such a 'Mech design. A 'Mech wielding twin LRM 20s should probably take the system; a 'Mech with a pair of LRM 5s probably doesn't need it.

Both the Clan and Inner Sphere models weigh one ton and take up only one critical space—so you don't need to worry too much about wasted space.

TIP

The "terrain following" feature is interesting, and can sometimes make the difference between a hit and miss. Don't get the wrong impression, though; your missiles will still run into steep slopes. But they'll be able to swerve up over gentle slopes, which might otherwise block a few of your missiles.

BEAGLE ACTIVE PROBE (BAP)

Tonnage: 1.5
Critical Spaces: 2

The Beagle Active Probe augments your radar somewhat, especially when it comes to locating shut-down 'Mechs. This can be useful if you're playing a campaign mission you've never played before, as it shows shut-down 'Mechs well before you stumble onto them. It also can be useful in multiplayer if your foes have a penchant for shutting down and hiding.

Generally, though, you can get through campaign missions without the BAP. It's useless in hard missions that you must retry again and again, as after awhile you'll memorize enemies' locations anyway.

In multiplayer games, the BAP isn't that useful if your foes don't do much shutting down. Try to determine your enemies' style of play before taking a BAP.

C3 COMPUTER

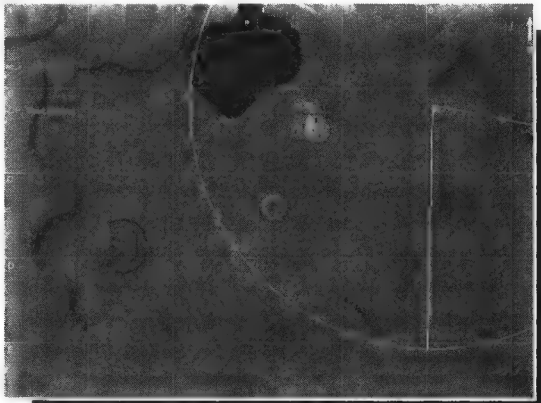


Figure 2-15. As a result of the C3 Computer, enemies outside your radar range—but inside your lancemates' radar range—will appear on your radar.

Tonnage: 5 (Master unit), 1 (Slave unit)
Critical Spaces: 5 (Master unit), 1 (Slave unit)

The C3 Computer consists of two components. The first part, the Master unit, goes in your 'Mech. The second, Slave unit goes into a lancemate's 'Mech. Additional Slave units can be placed in other lancemates' 'Mechs, assuming that you have more than one lancemate.

The value of the C3 is that it puts your lancemates' radar information on your radar screen. If your lancemate has an enemy on his radar that you normally wouldn't have on *your* radar (because you're too far away), you can see that enemy too.

Is this useful? Sometimes, especially in multiplayer. But for the tonnage cost, it's usually not worthwhile unless you plan on coordinating precise tactics that require you to separate from your team.

ECM SUITE

Tonnage: 1 (Clan), 1.5 (Standard)
Critical Spaces: 1 (Clan), 2 (Standard)

The ECM suite interferes with enemy long-range sensors and scanning equipment. It nullifies the effects of the enemy's Beagle Active Probes, Artemis IV, NARC missile beacons, Targeting Computers, Streak Missiles, and C3 computers. It does not, however, disrupt TAG.

Should you take the ECM suite? It probably won't make that much difference in your campaign missions.

TIP

If you like to shut down your 'Mech to hide from enemy radar in multiplayer games, you'll want to pack an ECM suite onboard to nullify enemy Beagle Active Probes.

However, you might want to take it when playing multiplayer games, especially if you can determine that your enemy is using any of the equipment that the ECM suite renders useless. An enemy that packs on Gauss Rifles and Autocannons, then relies heavily on a Targeting Computer for aiming, would be severely affected by the ECM suite.

MYOMER ACCELERATION SIGNAL CIRCUITRY (MASC)

Tonnage: 2 (Standard), 3 (Clan)
Critical Spaces: 3

MASC, or Myomer Acceleration Signal Circuitry, increases a 'Mech's speed while it's engaged. It does, however, generate quite a bit of heat. The length of time you can leave MASC engaged, therefore, depends on the amount of heat sinks on your 'Mech.

While MASC is operational, your 'Mech can run at 125 percent of its normal speed. If your 'Mech normally tops out at 64.8 kph, for example, you'll be able to travel at 81 kph with MASC.

MASC can be toggled on and off with [V] so you can precisely control when you want it to function.

It can also be a good investment for both small and large 'Mechs. Small 'Mechs can use MASC to enhance their already good speed, using it to dash away from the enemy or maintain long range during combat. Larger 'Mechs can use it to cross large stretches of terrain more quickly.

Using MASC in combat can work, but you need to have a 'Mech that runs very cool—or else the heat generated by the MASC plus your weapons fire will make it hard to avoid overheating.

NARC MISSILE BEACON

Tonnage: 2 (Clan), 3 (Standard)
Critical Spaces: 1 (Clan), 2 (Standard)

The NARC missile beacon is fired like any other missile. When it hits the target, any subsequent missiles you fire at that target are more likely to hit because of the presence of the homing beacon.

We don't recommend the NARC. Even the Clan version takes up three or more tons, because you'll need at least one ton of ammo to go along with the launcher. Furthermore, missiles are fairly accurate as it is; the NARC is usually redundant.

There may be a place for a NARC on your 'Mech if it's armed to the teeth with missiles, but an Artemis IV Fire Control System weighs less and doesn't require you to fire a beacon.

TARGET ACQUISITION GEAR (TAG)

Tonnage: 1
Critical Spaces: 1

The TAG targeting laser is only used in missions where Arrow IV artillery missiles are available. Whenever a missile is inbound, you can use TAG to paint the target and increase the chances that the missile will hit it.

The decision whether to take TAG or not is simple: If your mission will feature artillery support, take it. If not, leave it at home.

TABLES

The following tables summarize information about every available weapon. Use them for reference purposes.

TABLE 2-1. ENERGY WEAPONS

Weapon Type	Heat per Shot	Maximum Damage	Tonnage Spaces	Critical	Shots per Ton of Ammo	Range in Meters
Small Laser	1	Low	0.5	1	—	120 meters
Medium Laser	3	Medium	1	1	—	360 meters
Large Laser	8	High	5	2	—	600 meters
ER Small Laser (Clan)	2	Medium	0.5	1	—	240 meters
ER Medium Laser (Clan)	5	Medium	1	1	—	600 meters
ER Large Laser	12	High	5	2	—	1,000 meters
ER Large Laser (Clan)	12	High	4	1	—	1,000 meters
Small Pulse Laser	2	Low	1	1	—	240 meters
Small Pulse Laser (Clan)	2	Low	1	1	—	240 meters
Medium Pulse Laser	4	Medium	2	1	—	480 meters
Medium Pulse Laser (Clan)	4	Medium	2	1	—	480 meters
Large Pulse Laser	10	High	7	2	—	800 meters
Large Pulse Laser (Clan)	10	High	6	2	—	800 meters
ER PPC	15	High	7	3	—	920 meters
ER PPC (Clan)	15	Very High	6	2	—	920 meters
Flamer	3	Low (heat)	1	1	—	120 meters
Flamer (Clan)	3	Low (heat)	0.5	1	—	120 meters

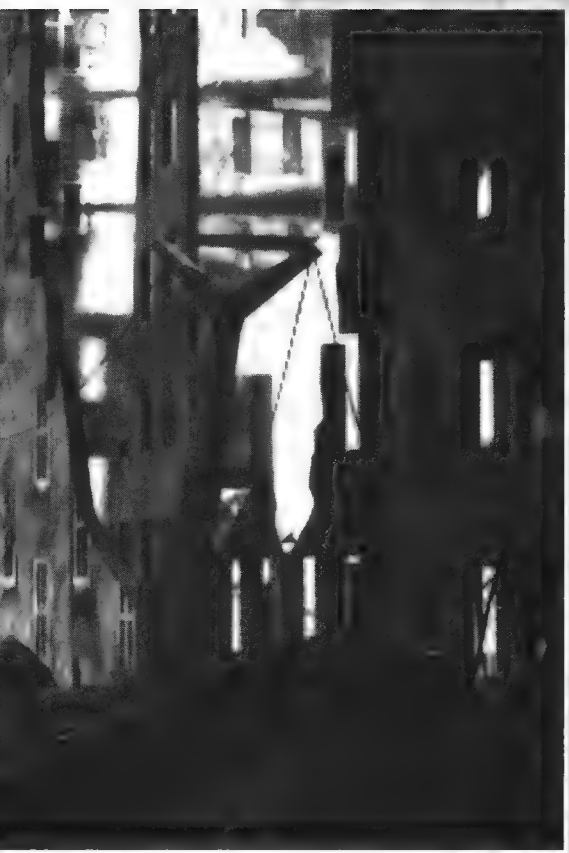
TABLE 2-2. BALLISTIC WEAPONS

Weapon Type	Heat per Shot	Maximum Damage	Tonnage Spaces	Critical	Shots per Ton of Ammo	Range in Meters
Gauss Rifle	1	Very High	15	7	8	880 meters
Gauss Rifle (Clan)	1	Very High	12	6	8	880 meters
Autocannon 2	1	Low	6	1	45	720 meters
Autocannon 5	1	Medium	8	4	20	600 meters
Autocannon 10	3	High	12	7	10	450 meters
Autocannon 20	7	Extreme	14	10	5	270 meters
LB-2X Autocannon (Clan)	1	Low	5	3	45	870 meters
LB-5X Autocannon (Clan)	1	Medium	7	4	20	690 meters
LB-10X Autocannon	2	High	11	6	10	520 meters
LB-10X Autocannon (Clan)	2	High	10	5	10	520 meters
LB-20X Autocannon (Clan)	6	Extreme	12	9	5	330 meters
Ultra Autocannon 2 (Clan)	1	Low	5	2	45	810 meters
Ultra Autocannon 5	1	Medium	9	5	20	630 meters
Ultra Autocannon 5 (Clan)	1	Medium	7	3	20	630 meters
Ultra Autocannon 10 (Clan)	3	High	10	4	10	540 meters
Ultra Autocannon 20 (Clan)	7	Extreme	12	8	5	360 meters
Machine Gun	0	Low	0.5	1	200	120 meters
Machine Gun (Clan)	0	Low	0.25	1	200	120 meters

TABLE 2-3. MISSILE WEAPONS

Weapon Type	Heat per Shot	Maximum Damage	Tonnage Spaces	Critical	Shots per Ton of Ammo	Range in Meters
LRM 5	2	Medium	2	1	24	800 meters
LRM 5 (Clan)	2	Medium	1	1	24	800 meters
LRM 10	4	High	5	2	12	800 meters
LRM 10 (Clan)	4	High	2.5	1	12	800 meters
LRM 15	5	Very High	7	3	8	800 meters
LRM 15 (Clan)	5	Very High	3.5	2	8	800 meters
LRM 20	6	Extreme	10	5	6	800 meters
LRM 20 (Clan)	6	Extreme	5	4	6	800 meters
SRM 2	2	Low	1	1	50	360 meters
SRM 2 (Clan)	2	Low	0.5	1	50	360 meters
SRM 4	3	High	2	1	25	360 meters
SRM 4 (Clan)	3	High	1	1	25	360 meters
SRM 6	4	Very High	3	2	15	360 meters
SRM 6 (Clan)	4	Very High	1.5	1	15	360 meters
Streak SRM 2	2	Low	1.5	1	50	480 meters
Streak SRM 2 (Clan)	2	Low	1	1	50	480 meters
Streak SRM 4 (Clan)	3	High	2	1	25	480 meters
Streak SRM 6 (Clan)	6	Very High	3	2	15	480 meters
NARC	0	–	3	2	6	1,000 meters
NARC (Clan)	0	–	2	1	6	1,000 meters

CHAPTER 3
'MECHS AND VEHICLES



THIS CHAPTER REVIEWS THE 'Mechs and vehicles that you'll encounter and pilot in your campaign against the Smoke Jaguars. It's important to be familiar with enemy 'Mechs and vehicles by name so that you have a good sense of what you're up against right from the start. 'Mechs can of course be modified, but just by knowing how heavy a given 'Mech design is, or what its most common design is, you can guess what sort of fire-power you're up against when you see one on the battlefield.

The statistics given for BattleMechs in this chapter are for primary variants. There are alternate versions available for most 'Mechs, and spending a little time in the 'Mech Lab allows infinite possibilities for change. Because you'll usually start out with a primary variant of a given 'Mech, however, it's useful for you to see what those primary variants' strengths and weaknesses are, and read tips on how to improve the designs.

TIP

Each 'Mech description in this chapter contains several sections of data. This information all pertains to the 'Mech's primary variant.

The first section contains general information such as the 'Mech's overall tonnage; the amount of that tonnage actually put to use; the 'Mech's walking and running speeds; and it's type of engine, armor, and internal structure.

The second section breaks down the allocation of tons inside the 'Mech, showing you how many tons go toward the engine, the armor, weapons, ammunition, and other vital systems.

The third and final section is a table that explains what weapons, ammo, and equipment are loaded on the 'Mech; how much those individual items weigh; how many critical spaces they take up; and where on the 'Mech they're placed. Note that tonnage and critical space information is for *one* of any given item; multiply those numbers by the number of the item loaded on the 'Mech for the total tonnage taken up by that item.

TIP

The 'Mech descriptions that follow contain hard data on various aspects of BattleMechs. Here's a short glossary of 'Mech terms. (Much of this information is also available from your game manual.)

- *Tonnage* refers to the overall weight of the 'Mech. All BattleMechs weigh between 20 and 100 tons. A 'Mech's overall tonnage limits how much gear can be placed on it.
- *Critical spaces* are places on a 'Mech's body where weapons and equipment can be loaded. A 'Mech without any free critical spaces can't hold any more gear.
- *Internal structure* is the 'Mech's skeleton. It comes in two varieties, standard (which is heavy but compact) and Endosteel (which is light but bulky).
- *Armor* protects the BattleMech. It comes in two varieties, standard and Ferro-fibrous. Ferro-fibrous armor is bulkier than standard but also offers more protection per ton.
- An *engine* powers the BattleMech. Engines come in Standard and XL (Extra Light). XL engines are very light but also very bulky.
- Your manual contains information on every other part of a BattleMech; refer to it for additional help.

LIGHT BATTLEMECHS

Any BattleMech weighing between 20 and 35 tons is considered light. 'Mechs of this size are sometimes referred to as Scout 'Mechs, though some of them are surprisingly capable on the battlefield as well as in pure scouting roles.

Small 'Mechs should generally be given lots of speed, as they need to be elusive if they want to stay alive. They have no choice in this matter; they can't wear enough armor to take serious abuse, so they need the ability to avoid enemy fire instead of enduring it.

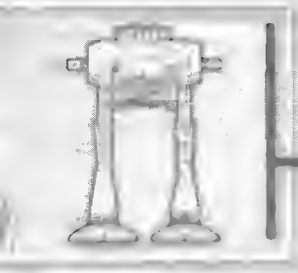
FIREFLY

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 28/30 tons
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: Standard (150)
Walk/Run Speed: 54/81 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 5.5
Heat Sinks: 0.0
Jump Jets: 1.0
Internal Structure: 3.0
Armor: 6.5
Weapons: 5.0
Ammunition: 1.0
Equipment: 1.0



FIREFLY

TABLE 3-1. FIREFLY WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Medium Laser (3)	1	1	Center Torso, Left Torso, Right Torso
LRM 5	2	1	Right Torso
LRM 5 Ammo (24 shots)	1	1	Left Torso
AMS	1	0.5	Left Arm
CASE	0.5	1	Left Torso
Jump Jet (2)	0.5	1	Left Leg, Right Leg

The Firefly is the lightest 'Mech you'll encounter during your campaign. At 30 tons, it's not the lightest 'Mech ever made, but it falls squarely into the "light" or "Scout" designation. It has about as much armor as the chassis can handle, but its speed is only modest for a 'Mech of this size. Jump jets help with maneuverability.

Fireflies can't torso twist because of their unusual body shape, making them somewhat difficult to pilot.

Fireflies are quite fragile when compared with other 'Mechs, and their light weight limits their options when choosing a payload. The key to success with this sort of 'Mech is to stay within its abilities, rather than trying to make it into something it's not. In other words:

- Don't equip it with one or two heavy projectile weapons that eat up all its spare tonnage. Stick to energy weapons and missiles instead, which are much lighter and can therefore be packed on in multiples.
- Specialize in one distance. For example, make most of your weapons close range or long range, and then try to fight at that distance. Diversifying too much is impossible because of tonnage considerations.
- Use this 'Mech in a Scout or support role. Hit and run, or else wait until heavier, allied 'Mechs initiate the battle—then sneak in and lend fire support.
- Remember that no matter how skillful you are, you probably won't take out a 90-ton 'Mech with a Firefly. Stick with tasks you can readily accomplish.

The Firefly's standard design uses highly appropriate weapons, considering the 'Mech's tonnage: three Medium Lasers, plus a LRM 5 rack to wear down the occasional long-range target. Its Anti-Missile System is also a good addition, as a 'Mech this light needs all the protection it can get.

The Firefly is, however, two tons light, using only 28 of its possible 30 tons. You can immediately add extra equipment—another AMS and another Medium Laser, perhaps, or a heat sink and a Medium Laser.

Furthermore, the Firefly in its default mode has lots of free critical spaces, yet its engine, armor, and internal structure are all standard. By changing the engine from standard to XL or the internal structure to Endosteel, or both, you could free up several more tons for gear.

OWENS

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 34/35
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: XL (280)
Walk/Run Speed: 86.4/129.6 kph

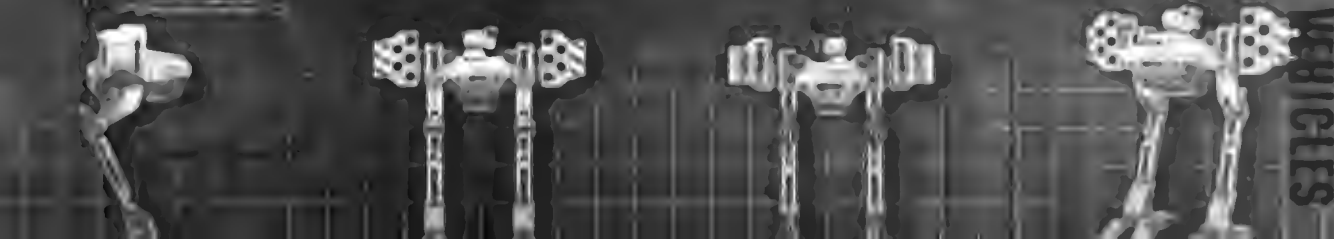
WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 8.0
Heat Sinks: 0.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 3.5
Armor: 7.0
Weapons: 6.0
Ammunition: 1.0
Equipment: 2.5

OWENS

TABLE 3-2. OWENS ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Small Laser (2)	0.5	1	Center Torso (2)
Medium Laser	1	1	Head
LRM 5 (2)	2	1	Left Arm, Right Arm
LRM 5 Ammo (24 shots)	1	1	Left Torso
BAP	1.5	2	Left Torso
C3 Slave	1	1	Right Torso



The Owens is geared for speed, not power. It lacks jump jets but has the best top speed of any primary 'Mech configuration you'll encounter.

The Owens' weapons configuration is quite good but also quite basic, with a pair of LRM 5s for long-range combat and a few lasers for shorter-range combat.

Like most other small 'Mech designs, the Owens can't torso twist. This can be a minor nuisance or a real inconvenience, depending on how much you torso twist in a fight.

TIP

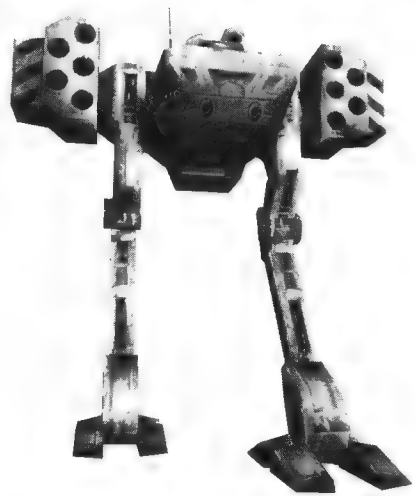
We have a tough time with 'Mechs that can't torso twist. These 'Mechs have to more or less face the enemy while firing, which makes it hard to move laterally while attacking. And without lateral movement, you're easier to hit.

You should "unlock" your targeting reticule when piloting these 'Mechs, so you can aim at any spot in your forward field of view.

While you shouldn't necessarily *avoid* 'Mechs that can't torso twist, you should realize that it'll take time to learn to use them.

This primary design can easily be altered for extra durability and firepower, assuming that you don't want the electronic gear that comes pre-loaded on it. Rip out the BAP and the C3 Slave unit for extra tonnage, switch the internal structure to Endosteel, and change the armor to Ferro-fibrous. This reduces critical spaces, but enough will remain to pack on some extra gear—preferably either more LRM 5s and ammo, or a couple of extra Medium Lasers and heat sinks. An AMS or two would also help.

If configured with more LRMs, the Owens makes a great hit-and-run 'Mech, striking quickly and then using its great speed to run away or maintain long range with the target.

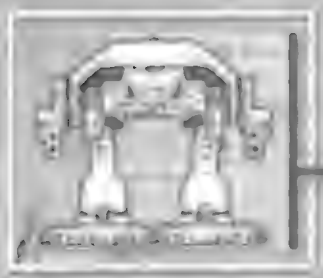


PUMA

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 33/35
Internal Structure: Endosteel
Armor: Ferro-fibrous (Clan)
Engine: XL (210)
Walk/Run Speed: 64.8/97.2 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)



Engine: 4.5
Heat Sinks: 1.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 2.0
Armor: 6.0
Weapons: 12.5
Ammunition: 0.0
Equipment: 1.0

PUMA

TABLE 3-3. PUMA ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
ER-PPC (Clan) (2)	6	2	Left Arm, Right Arm
Flamer (Clan)	0.5	1	Center Torso
Double Heat Sink (Clan)	1	2	Left Torso
Targeting Computer (Clan)	2	1	Center Torso

The Puma, in its primary configuration, is a genuinely brilliant 'Mech design. It uses advanced Clan technologies to pack on weapons that you wouldn't think were possible on such a small 'Mech.

You'd think the Puma would sacrifice speed for its incredible firepower, but it actually possesses decent speed for a 'Mech of its size—better than that of the Firefly, but it's not in the same league as the Owens.

The Puma achieves results in two different ways. First, it uses Ferro-fibrous armor *and* an XL engine *and* an Endosteel internal structure, thus freeing up lots of tonnage with super-light internal components.

Second, it uses energy weapons that are very light. Energy weapons are a tradeoff: they generate lots of heat but make up for it by costing very little in tonnage. This tradeoff is almost always worth it for light 'Mechs, which don't have enough tonnage for heavier weapons.

The Targeting Computer is a great addition, making it easy to aim those PPCs at long range.

Of course, the Puma isn't perfect. For one thing, it can't torso twist. Also, with only one heat sink in addition to the base 10 included with its engine, it'll overheat in no time flat if the pilot doesn't pay close attention to heat concerns. And finally, its single Flamer, the only short-range weapon on the 'Mech, seems like an afterthought; you might as well get rid of it, and concentrate on fighting only at long range. Replace it with an AMS.

The Puma doesn't use all of its potential tonnage: the two tons that aren't used in the primary design can be used for two more double heat sinks, thus making the 'Mech a faster-cooling design.

As it stands, however, the Puma is an excellent model of a hit-and-run light 'Mech design. It has extreme-range, potent weapons to hit at distances where most others can't fight back, a Targeting Computer to ensure accuracy, and enough speed to maintain long range against most foes.

MEDIUM BATTLEMECHS

BattleMechs between 40 and 60 tons are considered to be medium sized. These 'Mechs can be highly effective, retaining much of the speed of Light 'Mechs but packing on additional weapons for a lethal punch.

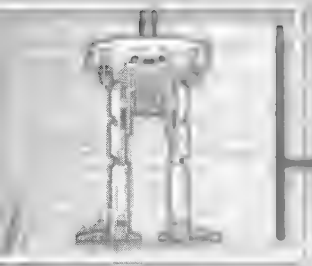
When customizing medium BattleMechs, never forget that these 'Mechs need good speed—not as much as Light 'Mechs, but they need it nonetheless. A sluggish medium 'Mech is an easy target for larger, better-armed opponents.

STRIDER

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 40/40
Internal Structure: Endosteel
Armor: Standard
Engine: Standard (240)
Walk/Run Speed: 64.8, 97.2 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)



Engine: 11.5
Heat Sinks: 0.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 2.0
Armor: 7.5
Weapons: 6.5
Ammunition: 2.0
Equipment: 4.5

STRIDER

TABLE 3-4. STRIDER ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

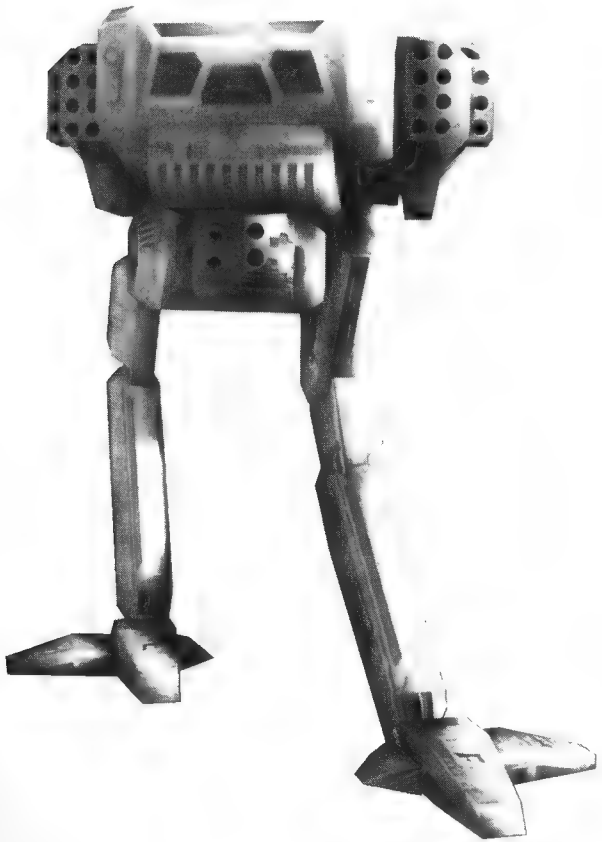
Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Small Laser	0.5	1	Head
SRM 6 (2)	3	2	Left Arm, Right Arm
SRM 6 Ammo (30 shots)	1	1	Left Torso, Right Torso
Artemis IV FCS (2)	1	1	Left Arm, Right Arm
BAP	1.5	2	Center Torso
CASE (2)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso

The Strider features decent armor and average speed for a 40-ton 'Mech, but it's not particularly inspired. It isn't fast enough to be a hit-and-run 'Mech, and besides, it lacks the long-range weapons necessary for that role. It has medium-range punch thanks to SRM 6s, but not enough to be a real warrior.

The Strider is, however, the lightest available 'Mech that can torso twist. If you want a fairly light 'Mech that can torso twist, take the Strider and give it a complete overhaul.

The first steps to the overhaul are to remove the Artemis IV FCS and BAP. You can even take out its weapons as well. Then switch its engine to XL and perhaps even move to Ferro-fibrous armor. This frees up loads of tonnage.

What should you do next? It's entirely decided by the direction you want to go with the Mech. If you want to make it a deadly Puma-like long-range hitter, add Clan ER-PPCs. If you want to fight at closer range, use more SRMs or switch to a Medium Laser-based design. It's up to you—the key is to revamp this 'Mech with a definite concept and provide it with strengths. As it stands, this 'Mech is too general, lacking a clear-cut role.



SHADOW CAT

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 43.5/45
Internal Structure: Endosteel
Armor: Ferro-fibrous (Clan)
Engine: XL (270)
Walk/Run Speed: 64.8/97.2 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 7.5
Heat Sinks: 0.0
Jump Jets: 1.5
Internal Structure: 2.5
Armor: 7.0
Weapons: 14.0
Ammunition: 2.0
Equipment: 3.0

SHADOW CAT

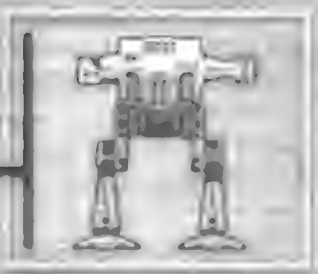


TABLE 3-5. SHADOW CAT ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Medium Elt Laser (Clan) (2)	1	1	Right Torso
Gauss Rifle (Clan)	12	6	Left Arm
Gauss Rifle (Clan) Ammo (16 rounds)	2	1	Left Torso
DAP (Clan)	1	1	Right Torso
Jump Jets (Clan) (3)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso, Right Leg
MASC (Clan)	2	3	Left Torso

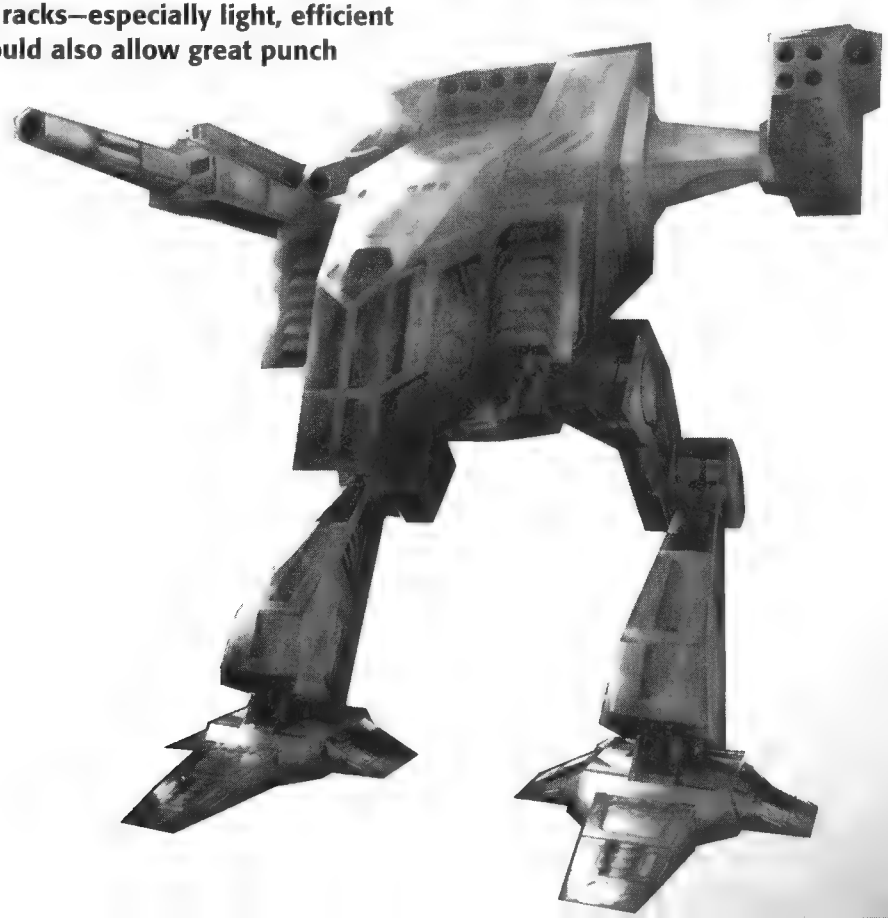
The Shadow Cat in its primary configuration is a potent 'Mech. By using Ferro-fibrous armor, an Endosteel internal structure, and an XL engine, it clears enough tonnage to mount a deadly Gauss Rifle. It's also quite well-armored, and faster than the average 'Mech. Plus, it's capable of torso twisting.

The Shadow Cat's weapons, the Clan Gauss Rifle and Clan Medium ER Lasers, are geared toward long-range fighting. Long range is a good range for a relatively light 'Mech to fight at, as it tends to allow the 'Mech to avoid damage.

The Shadow Cat's MASC and jump jets augment its speed and maneuverability, allowing it to stay away from most larger enemies and maintain long range during combat.

The Shadow Cat's only major weakness is that it's a little thin on weapons. The Gauss Rifle is impressive but it eats up lots of tonnage. If you want to stay with the 'Mech's general design, you might want to fill its spare ton with another Clan Medium ER Laser, then replace the BAP with another ton of Gauss Rifle ammo—just to make the Gauss Rifle last a bit longer.

You could also replace the Gauss Rifle with twin Clan ER-PPCs or multiple LRM racks. The PPCs would add extra punch and ensure that you never run out of ammo. And LRM racks—especially light, efficient Clan LRM racks—would also allow great punch as well, and perhaps leave some extra room for more lasers and heat sinks.



BLACK HAWK

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 49/50
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: XL (250)
Walk/Run Speed: 54.0/01.0 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 6.5
Heat Sinks: 8.0
Jump Jets: 1.5
Internal Structure: 5.0
Armor: 10.0
Weapons: 12.0
Ammunition: 0.0
Equipment: 0.0

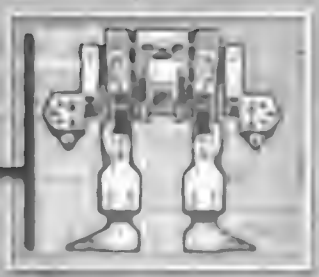


TABLE 3-6. BLACK HAWK ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
ER Medium Laser (Clan) (12)	1	1	Left Arm (6), Right Arm (6)
Double Heat Sink (Clan) (8)	1	2	Left Torso (3), Right Torso (3), Left Arm (1), Right Arm (1)
Jump Jets (Clan) (3)	0.5	1	Center Torso, Left Leg, Right Leg

The Black Hawk is a 'Mech that's easy to pilot. With 12 identical weapons onboard (Clan ER Medium Lasers), you'll want to maintain a distance of just under 600 meters from the enemy, which is the maximum range of those ER Lasers.

The Black Hawk has average speed and good armor. You can free up extra tonnage for more weapons by switching to an Endosteel internal structure. The Black Hawk also has an unused ton to begin with.

The concept of a medium-sized 'Mech that fights at medium-long range is a good one. You can, however, use the tonnage freed with an Endosteel internal structure to give it more of an edge. A larger engine or MASC would allow it to maintain the medium-long range at which it excels. Also, because this 'Mech is likely to be slugging it out with larger, better-armored 'Mechs, it needs all the protection it can get—so an AMS or two would help.

Bear in mind that you can cut down on heat by converting all those Clan ER Medium Lasers to regular Medium Lasers. That will also severely cut down on weapon range, but it'll increase the number of times you can fire repeatedly without overheating.

Also, you could remove two of the Clan ER Medium Lasers, replace them with two more heat sinks, and leave the rest. This would allow you to fire faster without overheating—and after all, 10 lasers is still a potent punch, especially when you're using group-fire mode.

This 'Mech can't torso twist, which may be a problem depending on your fighting style.

This is the sort of 'Mech that we approve of: A 'Mech with lots of similar weapons, so your fighting range is always clear. Our 'Mechs usually have two main weapons groups instead of one, however. A typical 'Mech would include a medium-range group (perhaps of Clan Medium Pulse Lasers), plus a long-range group (often consisting of LRMs, ER-PPCs, or Gauss Rifles), which would be useful for taking out turrets and killing small foes before they get too close.

The other common designs we employ include fast 'Mechs with potent long-range weapons (like the Puma's primary configuration) for hit-and-run combat and short-range heavy hitters. The short-range heavy hitters always have decent speed so they can get close to the enemy quickly, and they employ tough weapons like Ultra Autocannon 20s or massive groups of Flamers that can overheat the target almost instantly. These two general designs are usually reserved for multiplayer games, however.

BUSHWHACKER

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 55/55
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Ferro-fibrous
Engine: XL (275)
Walk/Run Speed: 54/81 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 8.0
Heat Sinks: 1.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 5.5
Armor: 9.0
Weapons: 22.0
Ammunition: 2.5
Equipment: 1.0

BUSHWACKER

TABLE 3-7. BUSHWHACKER ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
AC 10	12	7	Right Arm
AC 10 Ammo (10 rounds)	1	1	Right Torso
L ER Laser	9	2	Center Torso
LRM 5 (2)	2	1	Left Arm, Left Torso
LRM 5 Ammo (24 shots)	1	1	Left Torso
Machine Gun (2)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso
Machine Gun Ammo (200 rounds)	0.5	1	Right Torso
Heat Sink	1	1	Head
CASE (2)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso

MECHS AND VEHICLES

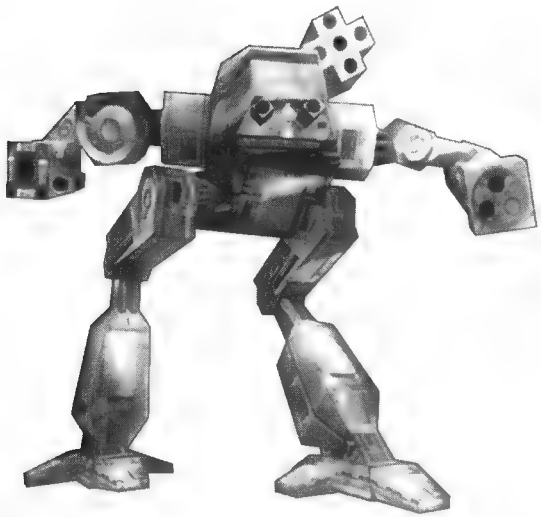
The Bushwhacker is the 'Mech you start the single-player campaign with. It's a capable 55-ton design with great potential, but some of that potential is lost in its standard configuration.

The Bushwhacker uses all available tonnage, and thanks to its Ferro-fibrous armor and XL engine, it uses its critical spaces quite efficiently. It can also torso twist.

If the Bushwhacker has a problem, it's the lack of a clear-cut role. Its speed is average for 'Mechs of its size (and larger), so it can't outrun many heavier foes—yet its armor isn't that tough, so it can't out-gun heavier foes in a fight.

To rectify these problems, first tear out all the weapons except the LRM 5s. The Machine Guns are too weak to bother with, and they don't have enough ammo anyway. The ER Large Laser has nice range but it'll overheat the 'Mech with only a few shots. And the AC 10 not only has too little ammo, but at 12 tons it's very heavy for a 55-ton 'Mech.

Replace these weapons according to what you want to achieve. A common solution is to add more LRMs for potent long-range punch, add several Medium Lasers for closer-range power, and a few heat sinks to keep heat under control. You also can add an AMS or two for defense, and improve the engine a few notches so the Bushwhacker can outrun larger foes.



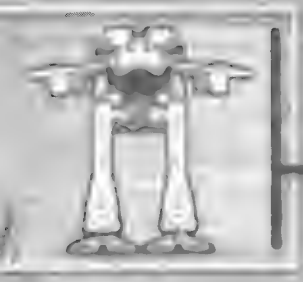
CHAMPION

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 60/60
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Ferro-fibrous
Engine: Standard (300)
Walk/Run Speed: 54.0/81.0 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 19.0
Heat Sinks: 0.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 6.0
Armor: 8.0
Weapons: 17.0
Ammunition: 3.0
Equipment: 1.0



CHAMPION

TABLE 3-8. CHAMPION ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Small Laser (2)	0.5	1	Center Torso (2)
Medium Laser (2)	1	1	Left Torso (2)
LB-10X AC	11	6	Right Torso
LB-10X AC Ammo (20 rounds)	2	1	Right Torso
SRM 6	3	2	Left Torso
SRM 6 Ammo (15 shots)	1	1	Left Torso
Artemis IV FCS	1	1	Left Torso

The Champion is an old Inner Sphere design. Though the primary variant uses all available tonnage, you can free up almost 10 tons simply by switching to an XL engine—so there's lots of room for improvement.

The Champion possesses average speed for a 'Mech its size. It could stand a few more tons of armor, and perhaps either a slight engine upgrade or MASC so it can outmaneuver larger 'Mechs. Also, note that it can't torso twist.

The Champion's weapons systems are geared primarily toward medium- and short-range combat. It possesses no true long-range weapons, and it depends heavily on ammunition. When modifying the 'Mech, you might want to remove the Small Lasers and the LB-10X AC, and replace them with more SRM 6s and ammunition, and perhaps a few spare heat sinks. These changes would make the 'Mech a highly effective close-range fighter.

Of course, because all of this 'Mech's weapons systems are standard, you could vastly improve on them by replacing them with Clan systems. This is especially true of the SRM 6s, because the Clan versions weigh only half as much as the standard versions.

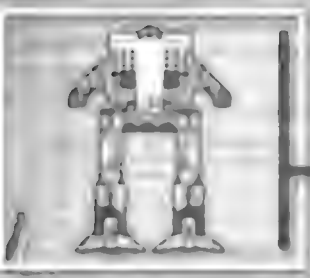
VULTURE

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 60/60
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Ferro-Fibrous (Clan)
Engine: XL (300)
Walk/Run Speed: 54.0/81.0 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

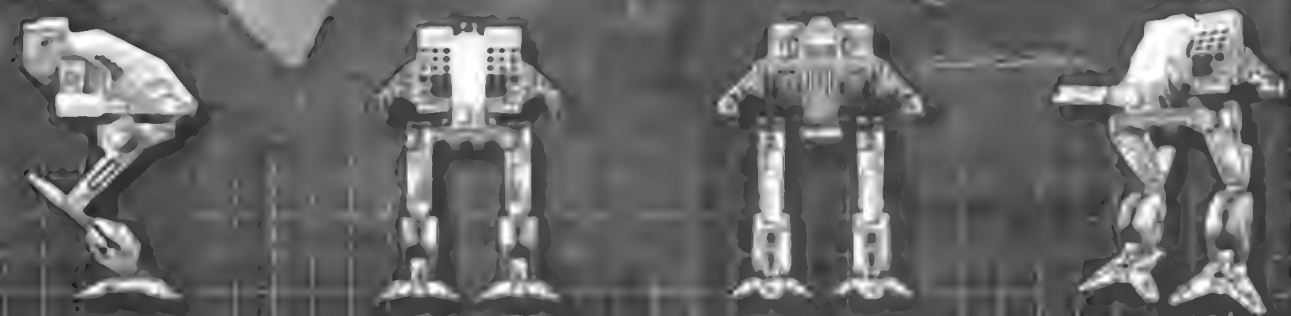
Engine: 9.5
Heat Sinks: 2.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 6.0
Armor: 8.5
Weapons: 26.0
Ammunition: 2.0
Equipment: 0.0



VULTURE

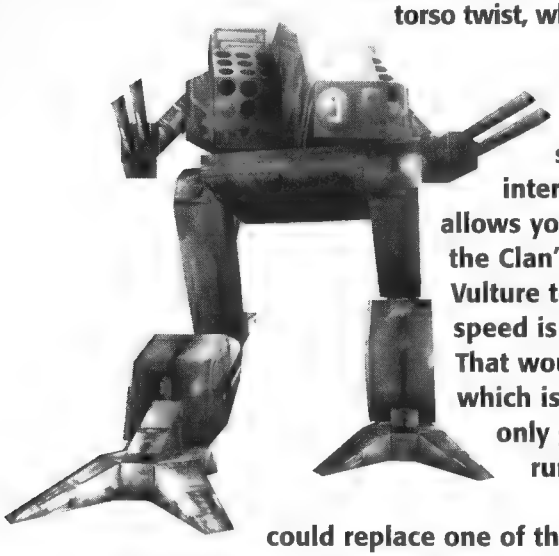
TABLE 3-9. VULTURE ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
LRM 20 (Clan) (2)	5	4	Left Torso, Right Torso
LRM 20 (Clan) Ammo (12 shots)	5	4	Left Torso, Right Torso
Medium Pulse Laser (Clan) (2)	2	1	Left Arm, Right Arm
Large Pulse Laser (Clan) (2)	6	2	Left Arm, Right Arm
Heat Sink (Clan) (2)	1	1	Left Torso, Right Torso
CASE (Clan) (2)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso



The Vulture in its primary configuration is an admirably good design. It's a long-range predator, attacking from afar. It was designed as a fire support 'Mech that would rain destruction on the enemy while the enemy was busy fighting other 'Mechs. However, the Vulture can be a formidable 'Mech on its own, as well.

While the Vulture is geared toward long-range combat, its battery of Large and Medium Pulse Lasers also can be used up close. The 'Mech can torso twist, which typically makes close-range fighting easier.



There are a few easy improvements you can make to the Vulture, especially if you wish to use it as your primary 'Mech instead of a fire support 'Mech. First, switch to an Endosteel internal structure, which frees up three tons and allows you to add extra equipment. We suggest adding the Clan's version of MASC, which would allow the Vulture to outrun most large enemies (because its speed is only average) and thus maintain long range. That would leave a spare ton for more LRM 20 ammo, which is sorely needed; as it stands, the Vulture can only group-fire its two LRM 20s six times before running dry.

If you wanted to further tweak the design, you could replace one of the Large Pulse Lasers with a third Medium Pulse Laser. This change gives the Vulture slightly less medium–long-range punch, but frees up tonnage for still more LRM 20 ammo and extra heat sinks. This configuration is suitable for missions where Mobile Field Bases (MFBs) are unavailable and you need all the ammo you can carry.

HEAVY BATTLEMECHS

'Mechs between 65 and 80 tons are referred to as "heavy 'Mechs." At this size, speed is somewhat less important than power. When customizing these 'Mechs, you should look to use weapons that can deliver a true knockout punch, leveling most targets in a matter of seconds.

While it's still possible to deliver decent speed at these tonnages, it becomes less and less efficient as the 'Mech's overall tonnage increases. Instead, most heavy 'Mechs rely on their heavy armor to see them through a fight.

CAULDRON-BORN

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 65/65
Internal Structure: Endosteel
Armor: Ferro-fibrous (Clan)
Engine: XL (325)
Walk/Run Speed: 54.0/81.0 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 12.0 tons
Heat Sinks: 3.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 3.5
Armor: 9.5
Weapons: 23.0
Ammunition: 7.0
Equipment: 0.0

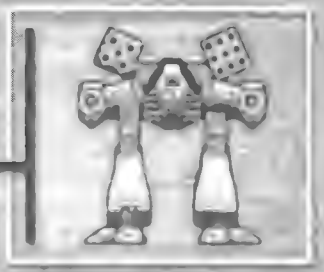


TABLE 3-10. CAULDRON-BORN ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Medium ER Laser (Clan)	1	1	Left Torso
Gauss Rifle (Clan)	12	6	Right Arm
Gauss Rifle Ammo (16 rounds)	2	1	Right Torso
LB-5X AC (Clan)	7	4	Left Arm
LB-5X AC (Clan) Ammo (40 rounds)	2	1	Left Arm
LRM 10 (Clan)	2.5	1	Left Torso
LRM 10 (Clan) Ammo (24 shots)	2	1	Left Torso
SRM 2 (Clan)	0.5	1	Right Torso
SRM 2 (Clan) Ammo (50 shots)	1	1	Right Torso
Heat Sink (3) (Clan)	1	1	Center Torso, Left Torso, Right Torso

The Cauldron-Born is well armored and reasonably fast, and its primary configuration uses all the usual tricks—XL engine, Ferro-fibrous armor, Endosteel internal structure—to free up extra tonnage. However, this configuration is likely to be a pain to pilot.

Aside from its inability to torso twist, the Cauldron-Born suffers from a wild disparity of weapons and a slight identity crisis. With no two identical weapons, the Cauldron-Born is likely to send its pilot scrambling to decide which weapons to use at any given time, and spending too much time switching between them. Most of the 'Mech's weapons are geared toward long range, suggesting this 'Mech should fight at long range, but the differences in its long-range weapons systems make them difficult to use all at once.

There are other questionable design decisions as well. For example, heat sinks are usually helpful, but in this case three heat sinks seem out of place on a 'Mech specializing almost entirely in low-heat ballistic and missile weapons. And the SRM 2, the 'Mech's only short-range weapon, is ineffective enough by itself that it can easily be omitted.

If you decide to use this 'Mech, simply scrap all the weapons and start with a clean slate, building it into something new and focused.

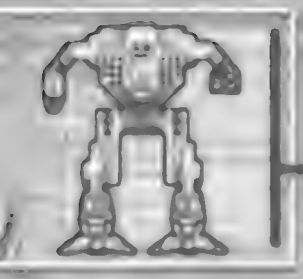
AVATAR

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used, Maximum): 70/70
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: XL (280)
Walk/Run Speed: 43.2/64.8 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 8.0
Heat Sinks: 0.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 7.0
Armor: 12.0
Weapons: 28.0
Ammunition: 6.0
Equipment: 3.0



AVATAR

TABLE 3-11. AVATAR ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Medium Laser (2)	1	1	Center Torso (2)
LB-10X AC	11	6	Right Arm
LB-10X AC Ammo (20 rounds)	2	1	Right Torso
LRM 10 (2)	5	2	Left Torso, Right Torso
LRM 10 Ammo (36 shots)	3	1	Left Torso
Machine Gun (2)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso
Machine Gun Ammo (200 rounds)	1	1	Right Torso
Medium Pulse Laser (2)	2	1	Left Arm
Artemis IV FCS	1	1	Right Torso
CASE (2)	0.5	1	Right Torso

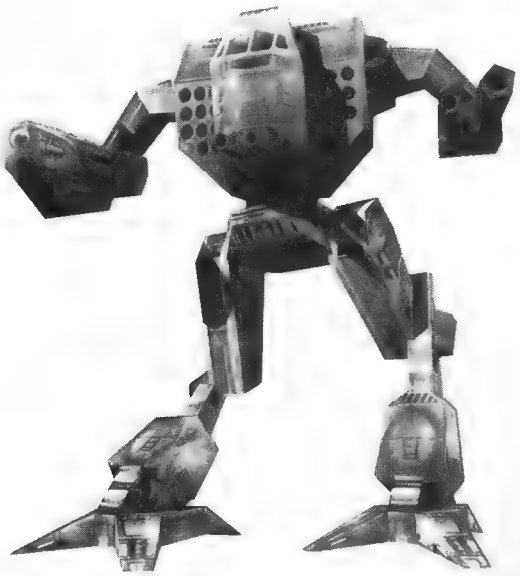
The Avatar is a favorite because of its lean, distinctive look and ability to torso twist. Below the surface, though, this 'Mech isn't quite as pretty. Its primary variant isn't as efficient as it could be; several questionable design decisions have been made.

First, the Avatar is both a little light on armor and fairly sluggish. It's comparable in speed to other Inner Sphere designs of its size, but Clan OmniMechs of this tonnage (and even slightly larger) regularly top out at 86 kph instead of 65 kph.

Second, the Avatar suffers from questionable weapons and equipment selection. Its pair of LRM 10s is formidable, but there's a wider variety of weapons than necessary—for example, instead of using either regular lasers or Pulse Lasers, this 'Mech uses both. Also, there aren't enough heat sinks available to continuously group-fire all four lasers for any length of time.

If you only want to make minor changes to the Avatar, switch its internal structure to Endosteel and scrap the Machine Guns and ammo. This will gain you several extra tons. Also, substitute any weapons you can for Clan weapons, which are much lighter. All these changes will give you lots of extra room, which we recommend using for extra heat sinks and armor, plus another Medium Pulse Laser or two.

Of course, you might be better off rethinking the entire design. If the 'Mech is going to remain this slow, it should probably have more long-range weapons because it won't be able to quickly close the gap with smaller foes. Alternatively, you could add engine size or MASC to solve the speed problem.



THOR

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 67/70
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Ferro-fibrous (Clan)
Engine: XL (350)
Walk/Run Speed: 54.0/81.0 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 15.0
Heat Sinks: 4.0
Jump Jets: 2.0
Internal Structure: 7.0
Armor: 9.5
Weapons: 19.5
Ammunition: 3.0
Equipment: 0.0

TABLE 3-12. THOR ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
ER-PPC (Clan)	6	2	Right Arm
LB-10X AC (Clan)	10	5	Left Arm
LB-10X AC (Clan) Ammo (10 rounds)	1	1	Left Arm
LRM 15 (Clan)	3.5	2	Left Torso
LRM 15 (Clan) Ammo (16 shots)	2	1	Left Torso
Double Heat Sink (Clan) (4)	1	2	Left Torso (2), Right Torso (2)
CASE (Clan) (2)	0.0	0	Left Torso, Left Arm
Jump Jets (Clan) (4)	0.5	1	Left Leg (2), Right Leg (2)

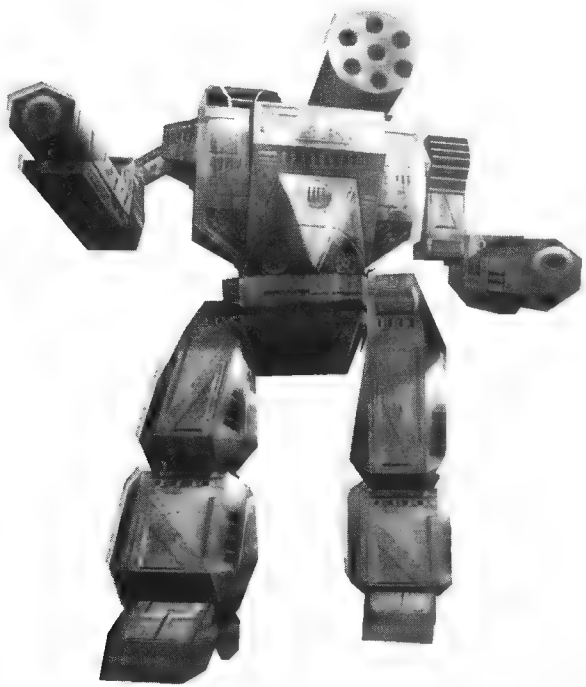
The Thor, in its primary configuration, is a potent 'Mech. As is typical of heavy Clan 'Mechs, it's as fast as most medium Inner Sphere 'Mechs. This speed, plus the agility bestowed by its jump jets, gives the Thor excellent mobility for such a large design. This 'Mech can also torso twist.

The Thor's weapons selection is a bit on the light side for such a large 'Mech. There are only three weapons systems—all potent, but only three nonetheless. They're all geared toward long or medium-long range.

Improving the Thor is easy. Its primary variant starts out with three unoccupied tons, and a switch to Endosteel internal structure will free up another 3.5 tons. Use these extra tons to pack on more armor, as the Thor's initial armor isn't very thick. A few more double heat sinks also would be good, as would an extra weapon or two.

If you want to go a step further, it may be a good idea to consolidate the Thor's disparate weapon groups. For example, you could replace the Clan LB-10X AC with another Clan ER-PPC, then use the leftover tonnage for more heat sinks. That would add to the Thor's effective range, and consolidate its weapon systems for easier firing.

Regardless of what weapons you add to the Thor, the groundwork for a great 'Mech is already in place.



MAD CAT

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 75/75
Internal Structure: Endosteel
Armor: Ferro-fibrous (Clan)
Engine: XL (375)
Walk/Run Speed: 54.0/81.0 kph

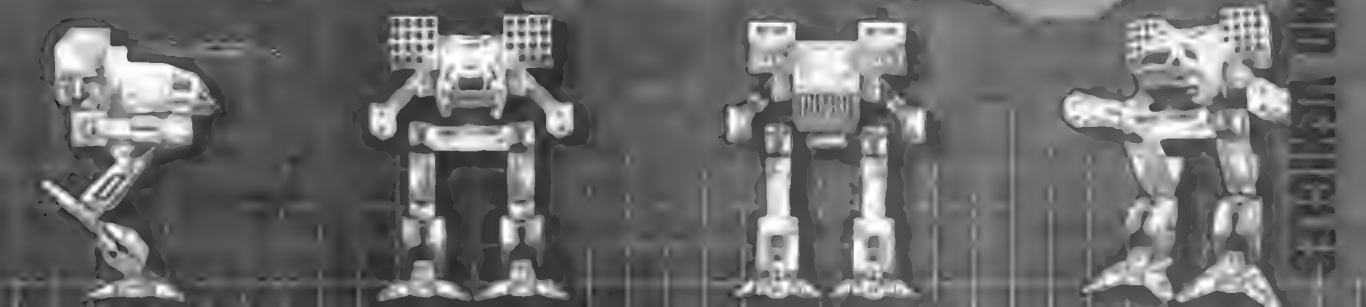
WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 19.5
Heat Sinks: 7.0
Jump Jets: 0 0
Internal Structure: 4.0
Armor: 12.0
Weapons: 23.0
Ammunition: 3.0
Equipment: 0.0

MAD CAT

TABLE 3-13. MAD CAT ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Small ER Laser (Clan)	0.5	1	Left Torso
Medium ER Laser (Clan) (2)	1	1	Left Arm, Right Arm
Large ER Laser (Clan) (2)	4	1	Left Arm, Right Arm
LRM 20 (Clan) (2)	5	4	Left Torso, Right Torso
LRM 20 (Clan) Ammo (12 shots)	1	1	Left Torso, Right Torso
Machine Gun (Clan) (2)	0.5	1	Center Torso, Right Torso
Machine Gun (Clan) Ammo (200 rounds)	1	1	Right Torso
Medium Pulse Laser (Clan)	2	1	Left Torso
Double Heat Sink (Clan) (7)	1	2	Left Torso, Right Torso, Left Arm, Right Arm (2), Left Leg, Right Leg
CASE (Clan) (2)	0.0	0	Left Torso

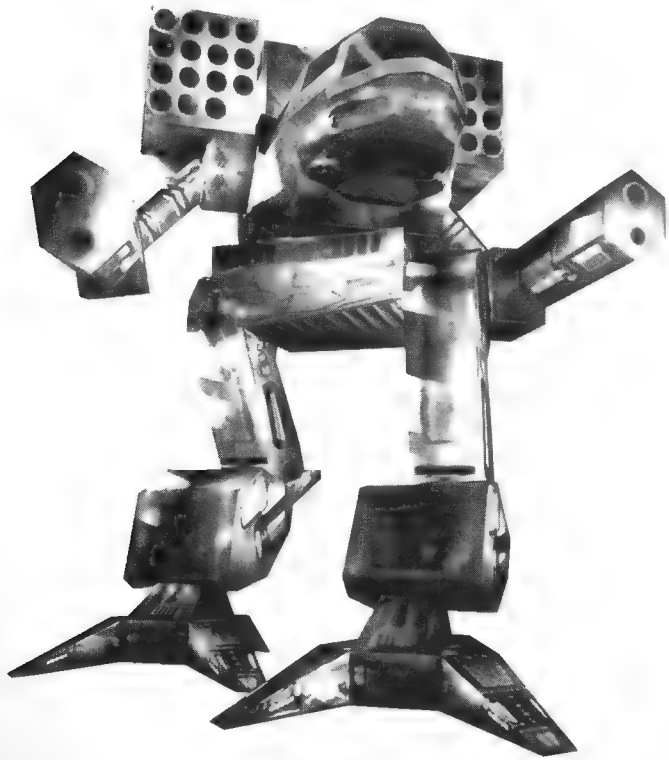


The Mad Cat makes the most of its tonnage. It's one of the best "off-the-rack" 'Mech designs available, featuring an eminently functional design in its primary configuration.

Featuring both excellent speed for a 'Mech of its size and a full complement of armor, you won't need to improve the Mad Cat in either area. The Mad Cat also is capable of torso twisting.

The Mad Cat is one of few 'Mechs that wastes no tonnage or critical spaces. It uses all the usual tricks to eat up critical spaces while saving tonnage, and as a result it manages to use *all* of its critical spaces and *all* of its tonnage. Thus, you won't have to do much to get this 'Mech into fighting shape; it's already there.

You may want to play around with the weapons, however. You'll probably want to lose the Machine Guns, and you might want to consolidate the lasers somewhat by making them all pulse or standard lasers. Alternatively, you could rearrange the weapons completely. Regardless, though, you won't have to do much with the chassis; this 'Mech is potent from the moment you get it.



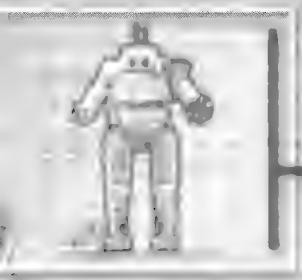
ORION

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 75/75
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: XL (300)
Walk/Run Speed: 43.2/64.8 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

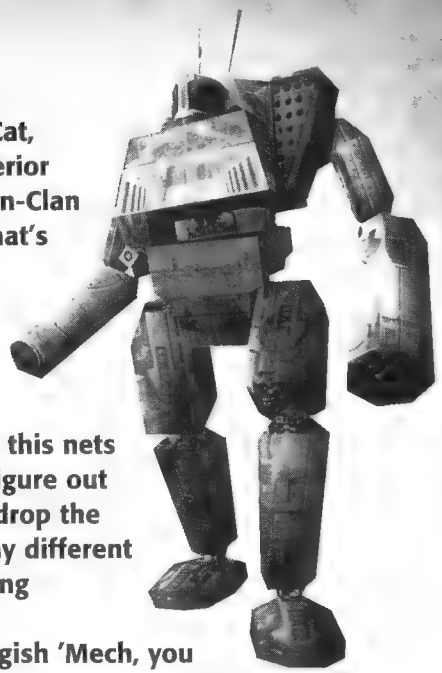
Engine: 9.5
Heat Sinks: 1.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 7.5
Armor: 14.0
Weapons: 28.0
Ammunition: 0.0
Equipment: 1.0



ORION

TABLE 3-14. ORION ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Medium Laser (2)	1	1	Left Arm, Right Arm
LB 10X AC	11	6	Right Torso
LB 10X AC Ammo (20 rounds)	2	1	Right Torso
LRM 20	10	5	Left Arm
LRM 20 Ammo (12 shots)	2	1	Left Torso
NARC	3	2	Center Torso
NARC Ammo (12 pods)	2	1	Left Torso
SRM 4	2	1	Left Torso
SRM 4 Ammo (50 shots)	2	1	Left Torso
Double Heat Sink	1	3	Left Torso
CASE (2)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso



The Orion is a big step down from the Clan's Mad Cat, which weighs the same amount but possesses superior attributes. Aside from the disadvantage of using non-Clan weaponry, the Orion suffers from a lack of speed that's typical of Inner Sphere 'Mechs of its size. Also, the Orion doesn't use its critical spaces as efficiently as the Mad Cat. Fortunately, the Orion *is* capable of torso twisting.

Switch the Orion to an Endosteel internal structure and drop the heavy NARC missile beacon; this nets you a cool 8.5 tons to work with. You should also figure out which weapons you like and which you don't, and drop the ones you don't. As it stands, the Orion has too many different weapon systems, and switching between them during combat is a pain.

If you resign yourself to having a relatively sluggish 'Mech, you can really beef up the Orion's firepower with all this spare tonnage. Also, switching to Clan weaponry, if any is available, will net you enough spare tonnage to speed up the Orion *and* give it more punch.

ASSAULT BATTLEMECHS

'Mechs weighing between 85 and 100 tons are Assault 'Mechs. These kings of the battlefield are typically slow and ponderous, and incapable of dodging most enemy fire. These 'Mechs can pack veritable arsenals, and rely on both their sheer firepower and durable armor to see them through most battles.

When customizing Assault 'Mechs, be sure to add enough heat sinks to allow smooth and continuous firing of primary weapon groups. With so much available tonnage, it's tempting to load up on weapons, but if you neglect heat sinks you won't be able to fire them often enough.

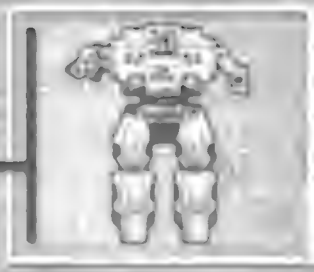
SUNDER

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 90/90
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: XL (360)
Walk/Run Speed: 43.2/64.8 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

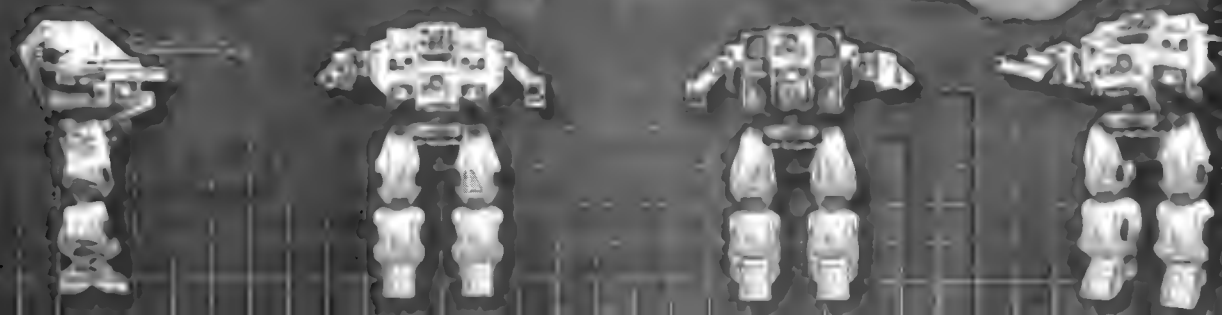
Engine: 16.5
Heat Sinks: 5.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 9.0
Armor: 16.5
Weapons: 32.0
Ammunition: 4.0
Equipment: 0.0



SUNDER

TABLE 3-15. SUNDER ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
AC 20	14	10	Left Arm
AC 20 Ammo (10 rounds)	2	1	Left Torso
Medium Laser (2)	1	1	Center Torso (2)
Large Laser (2)	5	2	Right Arm (2)
SRM 4 (3)	2	1	Head, Left Torso, Right Torso
SRM 4 Ammo (50 shots)	2	1	Right Torso
Double Heat Sink (5)	1	3	Left Torso (2), Right Torso (2), Right Arm



The Sunder compares favorably with other Inner Sphere 'Mechs, featuring speed that's comparable to many smaller Inner Sphere designs and *better* than the Supernova, a Clan design of the same tonnage. It also features thick armor, and it can torso twist.

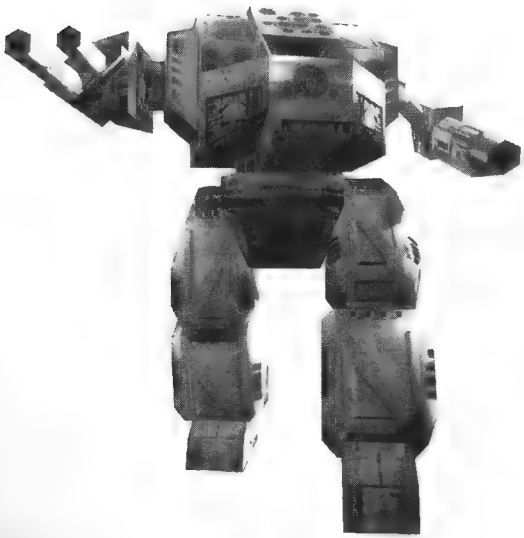
The Sunder's primary variant doesn't have many free critical spaces, so the usual tricks of switching to an Endosteel internal structure or Ferro-fibrous armor won't work.

There are, however, ways to greatly improve the Sunder. First, the Sunder suffers from its use of Inner Sphere weapons. Replace these with Clan weapons and you'll free up lots of tonnage and space.

Second, the Sunder has lots of double heat sinks but it also has an AC 20 and SRM 4s, which aren't terribly heat-intensive weapons. This seems like a waste. It might be a better idea to lose the AC 20, thus freeing up lots of tonnage, and add an ER-PPC and extra double heat sinks in its place. Doing so converts the Sunder into a primarily energy-weapon-based 'Mech with serious long-range punch, and enough heat sinks to handle its massive heat production.

Alternatively, remove the AC 20 and switch to an Endosteel internal structure. This leaves you with a limited number of critical spaces but clears a good deal of tonnage. Then, fill up that extra tonnage with weapons that pack good punch but use very few critical spaces—Clan ER Large Lasers come to mind.

Finally, understand that most 'Mechs of this size aren't this fast. If you feel like trimming down the engine size somewhat, you can create even more tonnage for weapons and heat sinks.



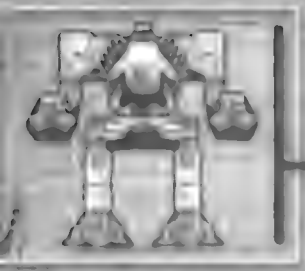
SUPERNOVA

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 86/90
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: Standard (270)
Walk/Run Speed: 32/54 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 14.5
Heat Sinks: 16.0
Jump Jets: 2.0
Internal Structure: 9.0
Armor: 14.5
Weapons: 24.0
Ammunition: 0.0
Equipment: 0.0



SUPERNOVA

TABLE 3-16. SUPERNOVA ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
ER Large Laser (Clan) (6)	4	1	Left Arm (3), Right Arm (3)
Heat Sink (Clan) (16)	1	1	Center Torso, Left Torso (0), Right Torso (7)
Jump Jets (Clan) (4)	0.5	1	Center Torso, Left Torso, Right Torso (2)

The Supernova is unusually sluggish for a Clan design, topping out at 54 kph. However, coaxing more speed out of a 'Mech of this weight is usually difficult, and very costly in terms of tonnage. You'll probably want to leave the speed alone, therefore. (Besides, the jump jets help out with mobility.)

Usually, use multiple, identical weapon systems. Having multiple systems of the same type allows you to easily group and group-fire your weapons, and eliminates the need to cycle between multiple weapons groups. But the Supernova takes this principle a step too far.

The problem is that the Clan ER Large Laser simply generates too much heat to be added in such large quantities. Group-fire all six of these weapons and you'll instantly destroy your 'Mech. Try it—your 'Mech will be blown to smithereens by the excessive heat. No amount of heat sinks will save you; while heat sinks help to bring down heat levels quickly, they don't prevent the *initial* surge of heat—and that's what destroys your 'Mech.

Even removing two of the ER Large Lasers and replacing them with *more* heat sinks just doesn't do the trick. You'll still have problems with heat spikes and you won't deal particularly good damage.

Here's a plan that'll make the Supernova a genuine powerhouse: Rip out all the ER Large Lasers and eight of those 16 heat sinks. In their place, put in a pair of Clan Gauss Rifles with lots of ammo (maybe 6 tons) and a battery of, say, six Clan Medium Pulse Lasers. Switch the internal structure to Endosteel to free up still more tonnage, and use it for a Targeting Computer, some AMSs, and anything else you'd care to throw on. Now you've got a deadly long-range punch that won't have any heat problems, and a battery of lasers for medium-range finishing power.

ANNIHILATOR

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 100/100
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: XL (300)
Walk/Run Speed: 32.4/48.6 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 9.5
Heat Sinks: 5.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 10.0
Armor: 12.5
Weapons: 52.0
Ammunition: 4.0
Equipment: 1.0

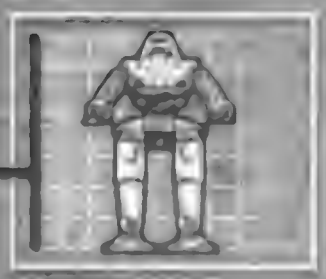


TABLE 3-17. ANNIHILATOR ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
LB 10X AC (4)	11	6	Left Torso, Right Torso, Left Arm, Right Arm
Medium Pulse Laser (4)	2	1	Center Torso (2), Left Arm, Right Arm
Heat Sink (5)	1	1	Head, Left Leg (2), Right Leg (2)
CASE (2)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Right Torso

The Annihilator is a 100-ton BattleMech, making it one of the biggest 'Mechs in existence. Its top speed of 48.6 kph is sluggish by any standard, but this is typical of 100-tonners; you shouldn't expect agility from such a large chassis.

More significant, though, is the Annihilator's lack of armor; it doesn't carry nearly as much armor as it should. Also, the Annihilator's weapons are questionable; the four LB-10X ACs generate massive punch at medium range, but they're ammo-hungry and they don't leave room for much else. Also, the four Medium Pulse Lasers are relatively potent, but their range is almost identical to that of the LB-10Xs, so you'll constantly have to choose which group to fire. It might be better to have a long-range weapon group and a medium-range weapon group instead of two medium-range groups.

The Annihilator's primary configuration doesn't use many weight-saving components; it has an XL engine but a standard internal structure and standard armor. Despite this fact, it doesn't have many critical spaces to spare. This is largely because it's loaded with LB-10X ACs. The standard LB-10X is a relatively inefficient weapon, and adding four of them to the Annihilator only compounds the inefficiency by four.

Here's a plan that will make the Annihilator live up to its name, assuming that you have the equipment for it. Bear in mind that this is only one way to improve the 'Mech.

Rip out all the weapons. Leave the standard internal structure, standard armor, and XL engine in place. Add three Clan ER-PPCs and seven Clan Medium Pulse Lasers. Pack on a total of 19 tons of armor, the most the 'Mech can bear, and load on 19 heat sinks, bringing the grand total of heat sinks to 29 (19 plus the 10 built into the engine). Add two Clan AMS, Clan MASC, and a Clan Targeting Computer.

Your 'Mech now has awe-inspiring punch at extreme range due to the trio of ER-PPCs, plus a Targeting Computer to help you aim. It has great medium-range and close-range stopping power thanks to the Pulse Lasers. It has enough heat sinks to handle the massive energy generated by its weapons (though you'll still need to exercise caution). It has great defense thanks to maxed-out armor and twin AMSs. Finally, it's still slow, but the Clan MASC helps it generate a little extra speed.

Now *that's* what a 'Mech called an Annihilator should look like.

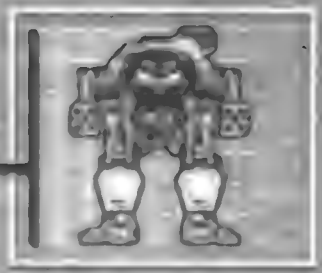
DAISHI

'MECH DATA

Tonnage (Used/Maximum): 100/100
Internal Structure: Standard
Armor: Standard
Engine: XL (300)
Walk/Run Speed: 32.4/48.6 kph

WEIGHT ALLOCATION (TONS)

Engine: 9.5
Heat Sinks: 12.0
Jump Jets: 0.0
Internal Structure: 10.0
Armor: 19.0
Weapons: 40.5
Ammunition: 3.0
Equipment: 0.0



DAISHI

TABLE 3-18. DAISHI ITEMS AND EQUIPMENT

Item	Tons	Critical Spaces	Location
Large ER Laser (Clan) (4)	4	1	Left Arm (2), Right Arm (2)
LRM 10 (Clan)	2.5	1	Left Torso
LRM 10 (Clan) (12 shots)	1	1	Left Torso
Medium Pulse Laser (Clan) (4)	2	1	Left Arm (2), Right Arm (2)
Ultra AC 5 (Clan) (2)	7	3	Left Arm, Right Arm
Ultra AC 5 (Clan) Ammo (40 rounds)	1	1	Left Arm, Right Arm
Double Heat Sink (Clan) (12)	1	2	Center Torso, Left Torso (2), Right Torso (5), Left Arm, Right Arm, Left Leg, Right Leg
CASE (Clan) (3)	0.5	1	Left Torso, Left Arm, Right Arm

The Daishi is a massive, slow, yet terrifying beast, much like the Annihilator. It does a good job of using its available critical spaces and tonnage, so if you have a quarrel with its design, it's likely to be with the weapons selection.

The Daishi does a good job of using multiple identical weapons, like its four Large ER Lasers. However, its weapons and equipment selections aren't totally optimized. The 'Mech's 12 extra double heat sinks are great for funneling away excess heat created by the Large ER Lasers, but they're completely unnecessary for the cool-firing Clan Ultra AC 5s.

Because the 'Mech already has a surfeit of heat sinks, it would seem reasonable to scrap the AC 5s in favor of weapons that would match already-existing systems. For example, if you scrapped the AC 5s you could add a second LRM 10 and ammo, two more Medium Pulse Lasers, three more double heat sinks, and an AMS for defense. Doing so simplifies the weapon groups and ensures that every group has enough weapons to be worth firing.

Ultimately, though, the Daishi is a great chassis to experiment with. It has so much room that you can experiment with all sorts of weapon combinations.

VEHICLES

The following vehicles are all found in the single-player campaign. MFBs are on your side; the rest aren't. Learn these vehicles' strengths and weaknesses so you can deal with them appropriately whenever they appear.

APC

Tonnage: 10
Cruising/Flanking Speed: 65/97 kph
Weapons: 2 Machine Guns

The APC is hardly a serious threat, but on the other hand, it can't be ignored. It features good speed and twin Machine Guns.

The best way to deal with APCs is to destroy them early, preferably from long range. A few shots with just about any weapon will do; don't waste valuable Gauss Rifle or heavy Autocannon ammo on them.

Since APCs' Machine Guns have severely limited range, you should be able to destroy them before they get close enough to scratch your 'Mech's paint.

DONAR

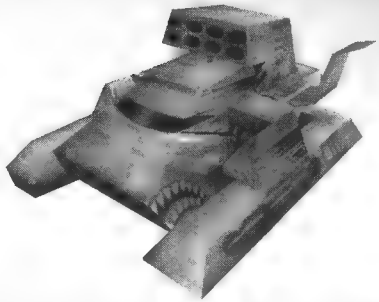
Tonnage: 21
Cruising/Flanking Speed: 97/151 kph
Weapons: ER Large Laser, 2 Streak SRM 2s

This Clan helicopter likes to engage in long-range attacks, but its Streak SRM 2s make it a legitimate threat at close range as well.

Dispatch this enemy as quickly as possible, using accurate lasers or homing missiles instead of Autocannons—this is a maneuverable craft, so you need all the accuracy you can get.

Don't leave the Donar around and allow it to bother you. Take it out quickly so you can concentrate on other threats.

HARASSER MISSILE TANK



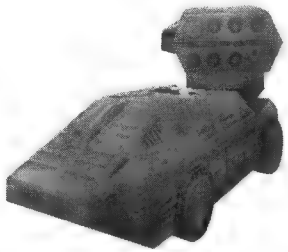
Tonnage: 25
Cruising/Flanking Speed: 108/162 kph
Weapons: 2 SRM 6s

The Harasser features potent short-range weapons, and the speed to get into suitable range to use those weapons.

The best policy is to shred the Harasser from afar with potent long-range weapons. Destroying it should be a high priority, as its twin SRM 6s have the potential to deal serious damage.

The value of the AMS (Anti-Missile System) will become apparent if you allow Harassers to get within SRM range; with twin AMSs, you won't have much to worry about from the Harasser.

STRIKER LIGHT TANK

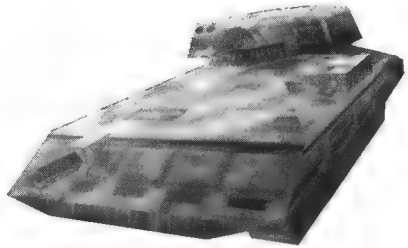


Tonnage: 35
Cruising/Flanking Speed: 54/86 kph
Weapons: SRM 6, LRM 10

The Striker can attack from both long and short range, but you should endeavor to fight it at long range whenever possible, where it can only use its LRMs. At medium range it can employ both LRMs and SRMs, and possibly become a problem.

Again, AMSs will go a long way toward rendering the Striker's threat minimal.

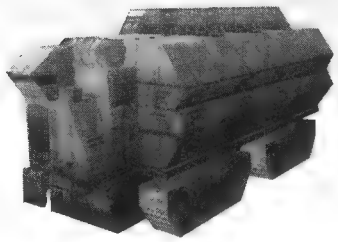
BULLDOG MEDIUM TANK



Tonnage: 60
Cruising/Flanking Speed: 43/65 kph
Weapons: Large Laser, 2 SRM 4s, 2 Machine Guns

Bulldogs are sluggish but surprisingly durable. It's advised that you fight Bulldogs at long range. At that range, they'll be able to attack with their Large Lasers, but they won't be able to return fire with their SRM 4s and their Machine Guns.

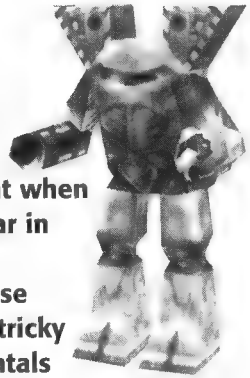
MOBILE FIELD BASE (MFB)



Tonnage: 200
Cruising/Flanking Speed: 43/64 kph
Weapons: None

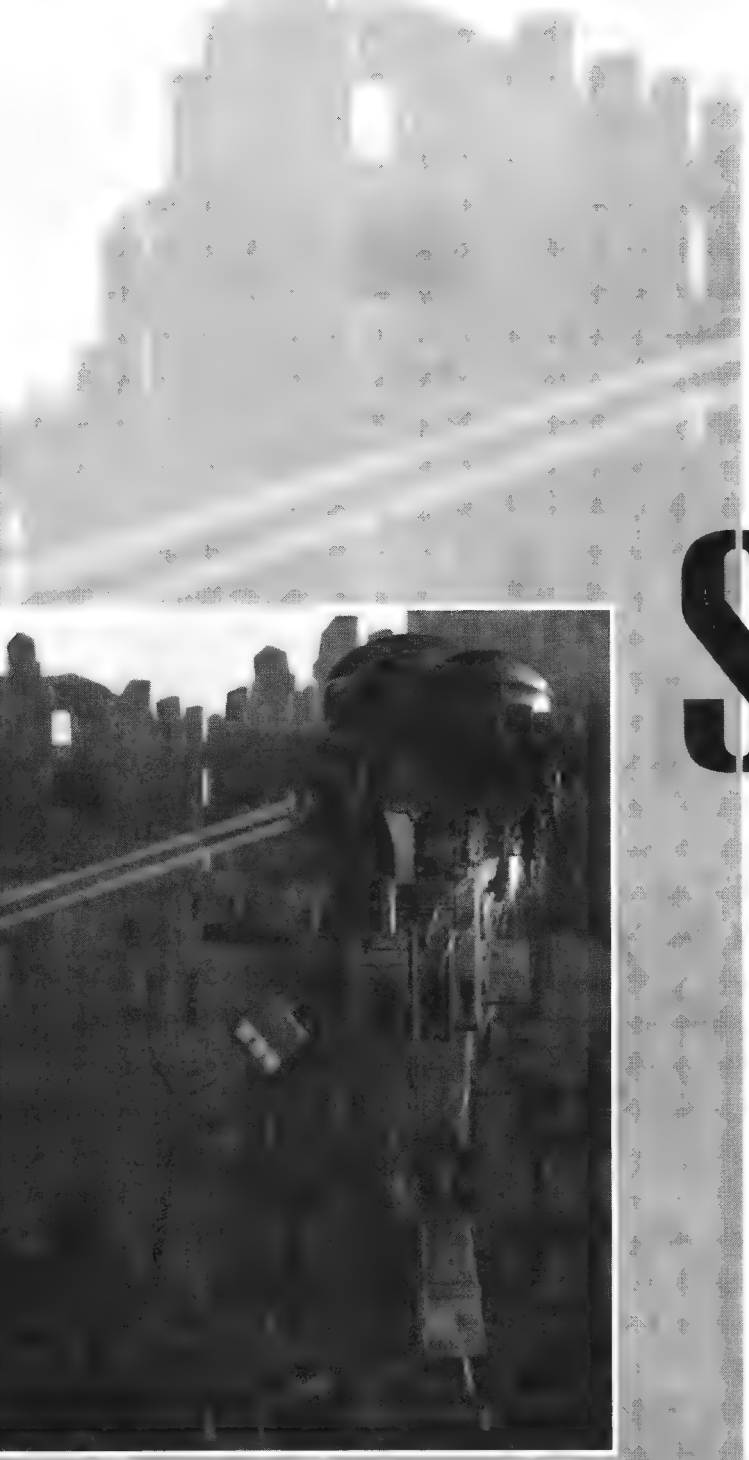
Mobile Field Bases are unarmed support vehicles that follow you throughout the campaign. They not only repair and refit your 'Mechs, but they hold the salvaged 'Mechs and equipment that you gather as you proceed through the campaign. These vehicles are invaluable, so you can't allow them to be destroyed. Protect them when they're threatened, and never order them into areas that you haven't already cleared of enemy influence.

ELEMENTALS



Elementals are humans in heavy powered armor—essentially, tiny 'Mechs. They can be equipped with a wide range of diminutive weapons, and though they're hardly a major threat when they attack alone, they can be hard to deal with if they appear in swarms.

Missiles, especially Streak SRMs, are a good weapon to use against Elementals; hitting them with other weapons can be tricky because of their extreme agility. You don't have to hit Elementals hard to destroy them, but hitting them in the first place can be a tricky proposition.



CHAPTER 4
'MECH CUSTOMIZATION

SEVERAL THINGS ARE REQUIRED for a successful mission. You need a sound, large-scale strategy for accomplishing your goals, you need to remain aware during the mission, and you need to make good tactical decisions as new enemies and unexpected situations arise. But even before all of that, you need to select the 'Mechs you'll use for the mission, and customize them as you see fit. Far from being an arbitrary process, 'Mech customization is crucial.

Having a 'Mech that's configured to both your individual preferences and the mission at hand makes a vast difference in your effectiveness. It's not an overstatement to say that even a great MechWarrior will have difficulty piloting a 'Mech that's poorly designed.

As you read this chapter, bear in mind that there's some degree of personal preference in 'Mech design and weapons selection. Most weapons available to the MechWarrior are versatile enough to be used in a wide variety of situations, so final selections are up to individual preference. The comments in this chapter include both cold, hard facts, and opinions based on perceived effectiveness of various weapons. We'll do our best to make it clear what's fact and what's opinion, and we encourage you to experiment with different weapons sets on your own.

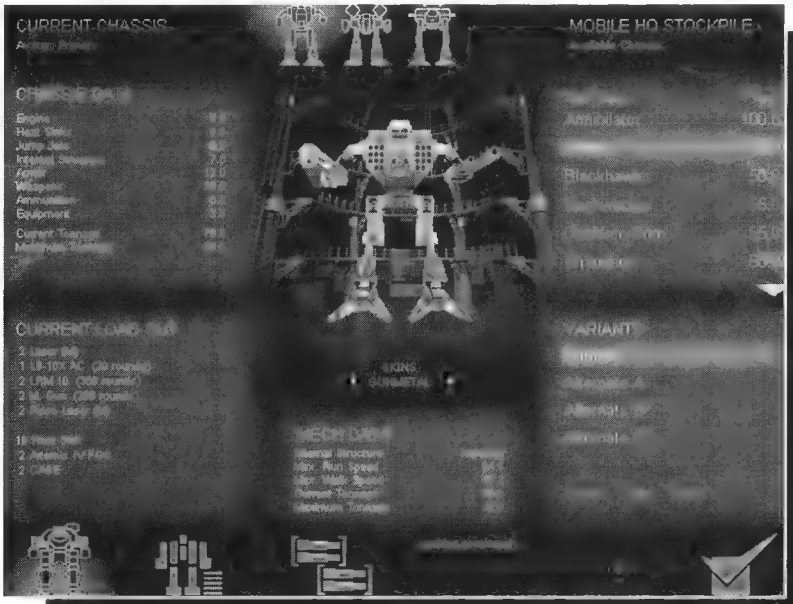


Figure 4-1. You can change almost everything about a 'Mech, save for its total tonnage and its appearance.

TRADEOFFS

Designing a BattleMech is all about tradeoffs. Add a Medium Laser, and you're using space that could be used for a heat sink. Free up some tonnage by switching to Endosteel internal structure, and you're reducing the number of critical spaces available for gear.

Here's a look at the key tradeoffs you'll have to make every time you customize a BattleMech.

BALANCING CRITICAL SPACES AND TONNAGE

You can't load an unlimited amount of gear onto your 'Mech. Specifically, there are two limits: tonnage and critical spaces.

Tonnage limits are self-explanatory. If your 'Mech's maximum weight is 55 tons, and you've configured it so that its current weight is 54.5 tons, then you can't add another 1-ton Medium Laser no matter how much you'd like to.

Critical spaces are the other limiting factor. Critical spaces are simply locations on your 'Mech where gear can be added. They're distributed across the 'Mech's body; it has critical spaces on its head, torso, arms, and legs.

You want to add as much armor, weaponry and equipment as humanly possible to your 'Mech, because there's *not* a bonus (either in terms of speed or points) for piloting an underweight 'Mech.

TIP

The head and center torso are mostly filled with essential gear like the 'Mech's cockpit, sensors, and engine. You can't move (or remove) this stuff, so most of the gear you add to your 'Mechs will have to go on the left and right torso, arms, and legs.

Now you understand that both tonnage and critical spaces limit how much gear you can load on your 'Mech—but where's the tradeoff between the two? This tradeoff can be best explained with examples.

EXAMPLE 1: FREEING TONNAGE AT THE EXPENSE OF CRITICAL SPACES

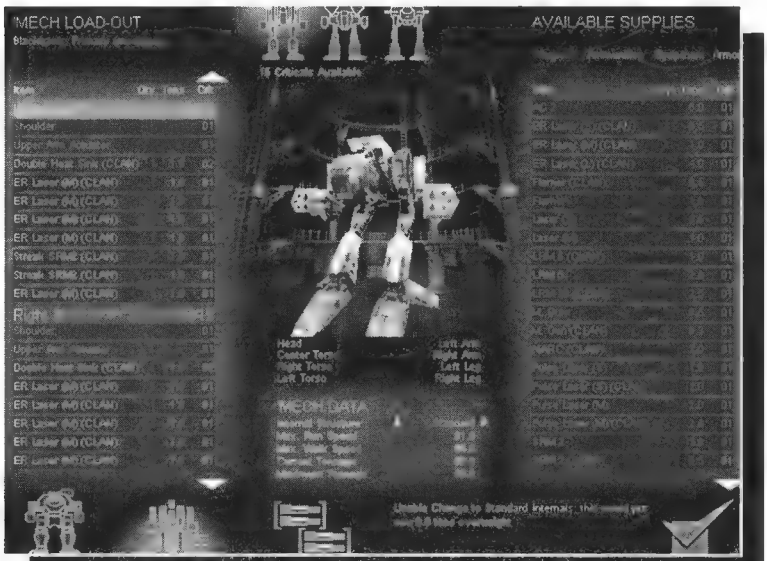


Figure 4-2. This 'Mech has 15 free critical spaces but no free tonnage. A switch to an Endosteel internal structure will solve the problem.

Let's say you have a 50-ton Black Hawk that's completely loaded with gear—its current weight is exactly 50 tons. It would appear that you can't add anything else. Or can you? Referring to the customization screen, you notice that the 'Mech has 15 free critical

spaces. That's a lot of critical spaces, and they aren't being put to use! If we can find some way to free up tonnage at the expense of critical spaces, we should do it.

This particular 'Mech has a standard internal structure, which weighs quite a lot but doesn't take up any critical spaces. Switching the internal structure to Endosteel has the desired effect, because Endosteel internal structure weighs less than standard internal structure. This frees up 2.5 tons, which can now be used for extra weapons, equipment, or armor.

Switching to the Endosteel internal structure *did* cost us seven critical spaces in the 'Mech's torso—you'll note that there are only eight critical spaces available after making the switch—but it was worth it. You still have enough critical spaces available to add the additional gear, made possible by the 'Mech's new lighter weight.

EXAMPLE 2: FREEING CRITICAL SPACES AT THE EXPENSE OF TONNAGE

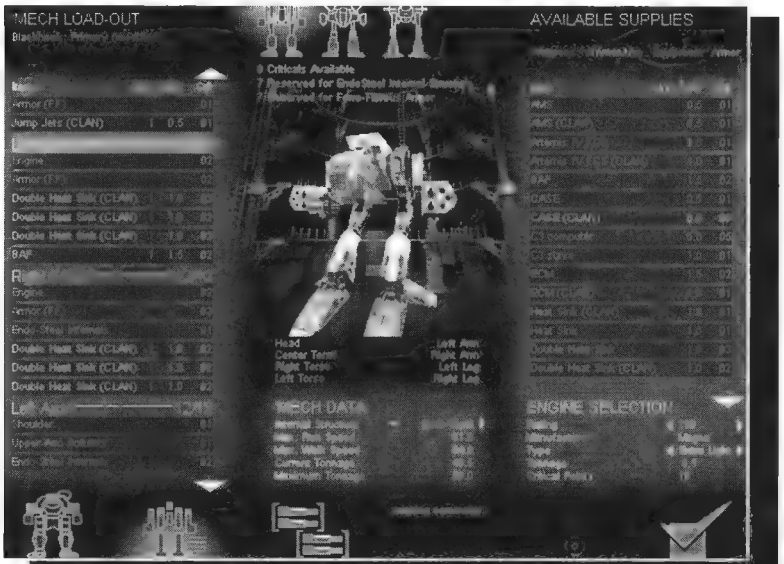


Figure 4-3. This Black Hawk is overloaded with features that save tonnage but eat up critical spaces. As a result, it has several tons to spare but no free critical spaces—so it can't hold any more equipment.

You might have a 'Mech with a few free tons, but no critical spaces. The result is the same as having free critical spaces but no spare tonnage: you can't add any more gear.

This scenario is usually the result of using too many lightweight, high-tech options simultaneously. For example, a Black Hawk with Endosteel internal structure *and* an XL (Extra Light) engine *and* Ferro-fibrous armor is begging for this sort of problem. All three of these options reduce weight but take up critical spaces.

The answer in this case is simply to switch a lightweight component to a standard component: use a standard internal structure or engine, or regular (not Ferro-fibrous) armor.

SUMMARY

The key, when balancing free tonnage with free critical spaces, is to make sure you don't have a massive surplus of one or the other. If you have no free tonnage but you've got lots of free critical spaces, use an XL engine or an Endosteel internal structure to free up tonnage. If you have free tonnage but no free critical spaces, switch either the armor, engine, or internal structure to a standard variety to free up more criticals.

Play around with various options and see what works. You can't expect to use *all* of a 'Mech's tonnage and *all* of its critical spaces. Instead, just try to use all the tonnage. If you've done that, and if there isn't anything else you can do to free up extra tonnage without creating a shortage of critical spaces, you've designed the 'Mech efficiently.

SPEED VS. WEAPONS VS. ARMOR

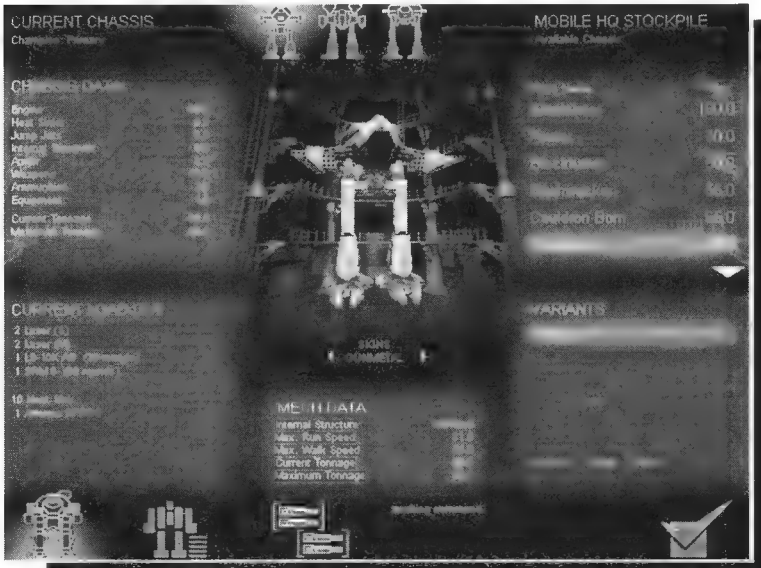


Figure 4-4. This Champion, with its walking speed of 54 and its running speed of 81, is typical of medium-sized and heavy 'Mechs. Add more speed and this 'Mech will be able to outrun most medium and heavy foes.

There's a limited amount of space on your 'Mech, and you have to decide how to use it. Armor, weapons, and miscellaneous items all take up space and tonnage. You'll have to decide what to add and what to exclude. More armor, for example, means less room for weapons and a big engine (which means less speed).

We'll elaborate on the items we think are important for a 'Mech later in this chapter, but for now, here are a few rules to live by:

- Never skimp on armor. You'll regret it if you do.
- Weapons are good, but it's possible to go overboard. If your 'Mech gets severely overheated from group-firing its primary weapons group repeatedly, it doesn't need more weapons—it needs more heat sinks and extra gear.
- Miscellaneous gear can be useful, but it doesn't kill enemy 'Mechs. Add equipment that you think might help, but don't allow this gear to grow disproportionate to armor and weapons.

QUALITY VS. AVAILABILITY

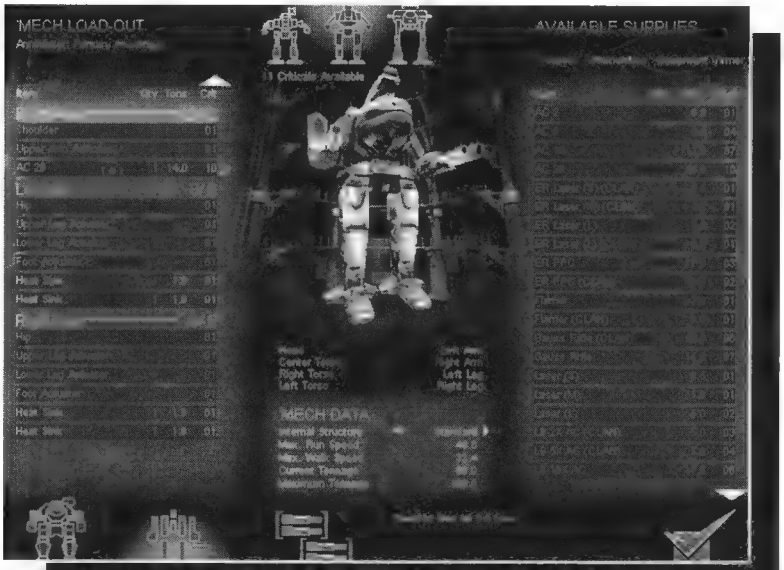


Figure 4-5. Be sure you have enough ammo for that shiny new Autocannon 20, or you'll find yourself running dry during the mission.

You start your campaign with a very limited selection of weapons and gear, and limited amounts of armor. As you proceed through each mission you'll gain additional gear in the form of salvage. Generally speaking, this gear tends to be better than the gear with which you started. Much of it is Clan-made, and Clan weapons tend to be lighter, more powerful, or just all-around better than Inner Sphere designs.

Obviously, you'll want to add these new items to your 'Mechs as quickly as possible, but you'll have to balance this desire against weapon availability. For example, you might want to use that brand new Ultra Autocannon 20, but you only salvaged eight rounds of ammo for it. In this case, you might want to hold off until you retrieve more ammo.

CUSTOMIZING A 'MECH IN SIX EASY STEPS

You can customize your 'Mechs in any way you choose, and you can tackle the customization process in any order that appeals to you. There is no "right" way. However, if you find yourself at a loss when trying to deal with all the possibilities of 'Mech design, here's a six-step process you can follow.

STEP 1: HAVE A VISION

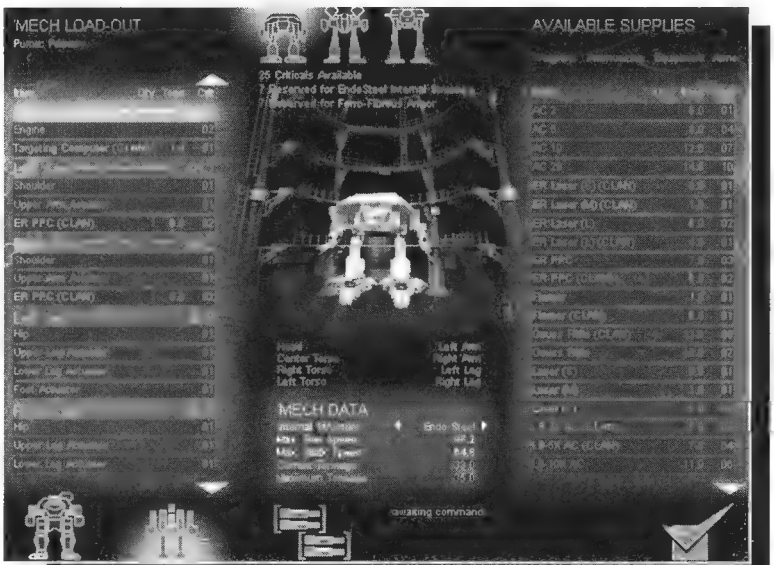


Figure 4-6. Start with a specific plan or vision, like a light 'Mech with potent long-range punch.

TIP

You'll find that your newly salvaged weapons, however powerful, sometimes don't fit into your plans with a particular 'Mech.

For example, if you have a 'Mech that features a battery of Medium Pulse Lasers, a Clan SRM 6 might be hard to integrate. The SRM 6 features a similar range as the Pulse Lasers, so it's tempting to group it in with them, but the targeting requirements of the SRM 6 are different—so you might make aiming that weapons group difficult. Put the SRM 6 in its own group, on the other hand, and you might find that it's a pain to switch between it and the Pulse Lasers in the heat of battle. The moral of the story is if the shoe "doesn't" fit, don't wear it.

When you first start tinkering with 'Mechs you might want to play around for awhile, without any specific vision of what you're trying to achieve. Doing this lets you get a feel for what is and isn't possible in 'Mech design.

Once you're ready to tackle campaign missions, however, it helps to think about what sort of 'Mech you're trying to design. Do you want a small, fast 'Mech with long-range capabilities that can pick apart the enemy from afar? How about a massive close-combat juggernaut with formidable, heavy Autocannons? Decide what you're shooting for before starting to tinker, or you'll have difficulty arriving at a final design.

STEP 2: REMOVE EXCESS GEAR

Figure 4-7. Strip excess gear from the 'Mech, so you've got a clean slate to work with.

Once you've decided what sort of 'Mech you want, strip off the base model's excess gear. You might even want to take out gear that you plan to keep, since you'll probably be placing it in a different location anyway.

Once the gear is off, you've got a clean slate to work with.

STEP 3: ADJUST THE ARMOR, INTERNAL STRUCTURE, AND ENGINE

Figure 4-8. Adjust major attributes like engine type and size.

Now that the 'Mech is unloaded, you can make some large-scale decisions. First, you should try to decide how fast your 'Mech needs to be. Increasing the size of the engine reduces the amount of tonnage available to you, but it does enhance performance. Reducing the engine size gives you extra tons for weapons and gear, but it's not recommended; slow 'Mechs not only make traveling across the map boring and tedious, but they also tend to get hit more than fast 'Mechs. Therefore, unless you're absolutely certain that speed isn't an issue, you probably don't want to reduce engine size to less than the default value.

Now select your engine type. If you decided to go with a bigger engine size, you'll probably want to use an XL engine. This eats up critical spaces but reduces the overall tonnage of the engine.

Next you should address armor. Ferro-fibrous armor provides extra protection per ton of armor, cutting down on overall tonnage—but like the XL engine, it cuts down on critical spaces. It's a good idea to use it if the critical spaces are available, and if you have an adequate supply of it. Otherwise, regular armor will suffice. (Note that you have to take off all of the old armor type before applying a new type.)

TIP

Adding a larger engine consumes valuable tonnage, so be sure that you'll use the extra speed before upping engine size. On the other hand, having a 'Mech that's significantly slower than average is usually a bad idea.

For purposes of comparison, a maximum speed of 81 kph is fairly standard for medium to large 'Mechs. Smaller 'Mechs that need a speed advantage to be effective will want a top speed of at least 97 kph. Huge 90- and 100-tonners tend to have low top speeds, often around 48 kph.

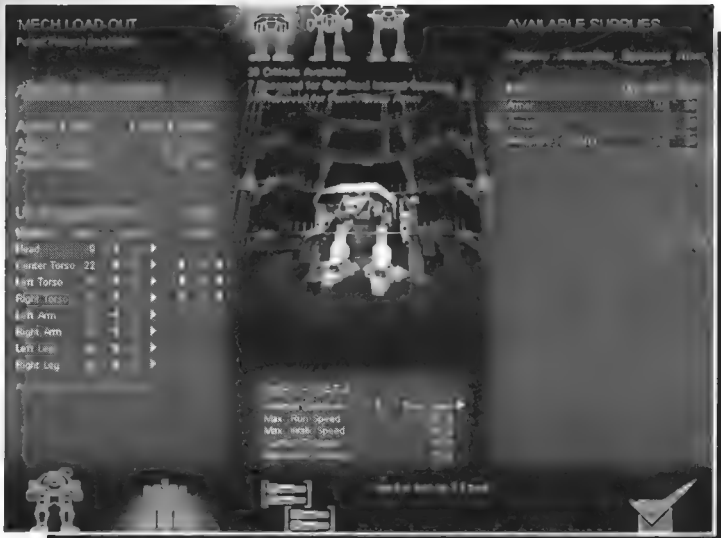


Figure 4-9. Ferro-fibrous armor provides more protection per ton of armor, but at the cost of critical spaces.

How much armor is enough? It's a good idea to protect your 'Mech with either the maximum allowable amount of armor, or with something very close. 'Mechs without substantial armor are too vulnerable to withstand the rigors of a campaign.

TIP

If you decide not to use the maximum amount of armor, you might want to designate an arm as a "throwaway" and leave it unarmored. For example, you could leave your 'Mech's left arm completely unarmored, distributing the armor to the rest of its body. Be careful not to put any weapons or gear on that arm, so if it gets blown away, there's no big loss. This technique ensures that the vital areas of the 'Mech are well armored even though you skimped.

Designating non-arm areas as throwaways can lead to disastrous consequences: getting the 'Mech's head destroyed will kill you, getting the torso destroyed leads to mission-ending engine explosions, and getting a leg shot off ends your mission as well.

TIP

Torso areas have armor in both the front and back. You can decide how to distribute armor points between these two sides. Generally, we recommend using the armor distribution created by the "Auto-distribute" button. You need some armor in back, but the majority of it should be up front.

Of course, if you're *really* certain that you won't let your enemies get behind you, you can put it all up front. But don't say we didn't warn you!

Figure 4-10. The majority of torso armor should be in front, not in back—unless you plan on developing a truly bizarre combat style which requires you to continually turn away from your enemy.

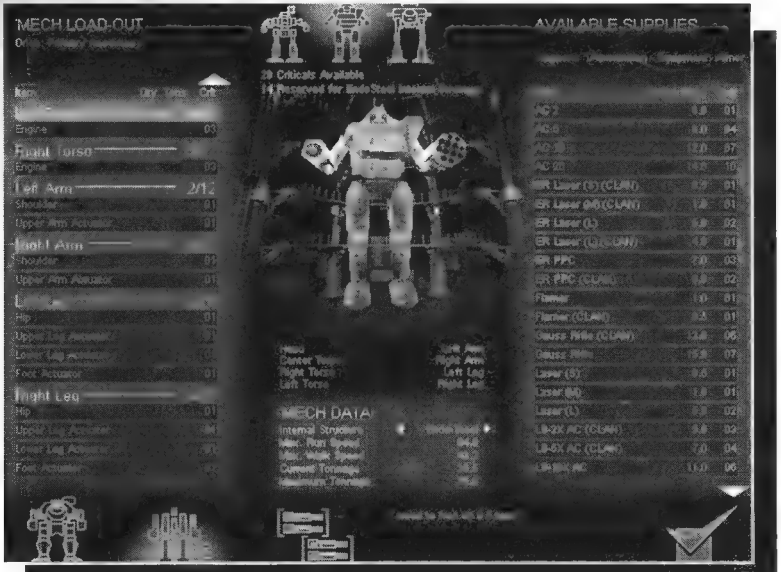


Figure 4-11. Pick between a standard or Endosteel internal structure.

Finally, decide between a standard or Endosteel internal structure. The Endosteel is lighter, but if you've already gone with the XL engine and Ferro-fibrous armor, you're probably short on critical spaces, and thus should stick with standard.

When you've set the engine, armor, and internal structure roughly the way you want them, move on. Don't agonize too much about tweaking them; we'll get to that later, after you've added some weapons.

STEP 4: ADD WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

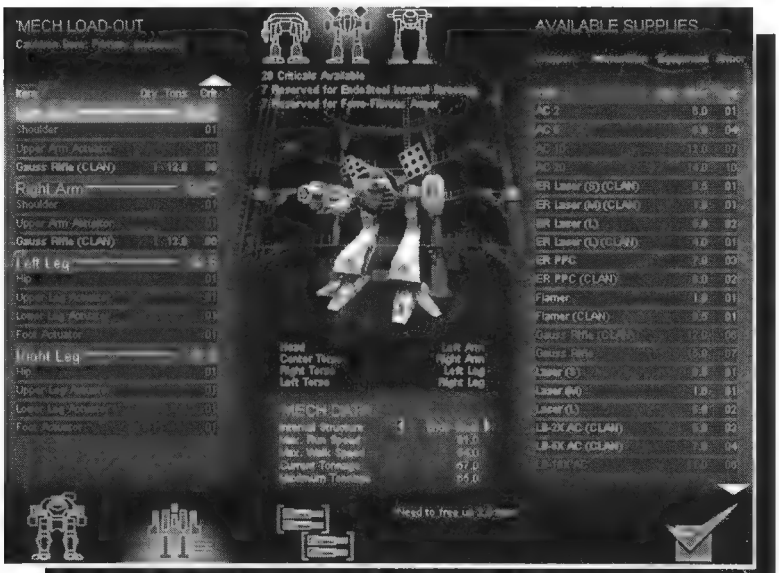


Figure 4-12. Add weapons and equipment that are consistent with your original vision.

Now it's time to add weapons and equipment. Weapons selection is discussed at length later in this chapter, so for now, we'll just suggest that you add the weapons and equipment you originally planned to add.

Often you'll find that tonnage or

space considerations make it impossible to add everything you want. If so, determine whether you've *almost* got enough room to add the gear you wanted, or whether you're nowhere close. If you're nowhere close, you'll have to rethink your plans. If you're in the ballpark, though, you can address the problem in the next step.

STEP 5: TWEAK VALUES

Figure 4-13. Tweak minor attributes (like adding or removing a half-ton of armor) to make the design work.

'Mech design seldom goes as planned. If you couldn't fit in everything you originally wanted, if you have some free space left over, or if you need to manipulate your ratio of critical spaces to tonnage, now's the time to do it.

If you're trying to fit in specific weapons or pieces of equipment, you can make small changes; adjust the engine size a notch, remove a half-ton of armor, or just remove a weapon you like less.

If you have a serious imbalance in the ratio of free tonnage to free critical spaces, you might want to go ahead and adjust the engine type, armor type, or internal structure type to free up extra weight or space.

Once you're done tweaking, move along to the final step.

STEP 6: SAVE YOUR CREATION

The last step is an easy one: Save your 'Mech. It's easy to forget what you did, and this way you can go back later (once you've field tested the 'Mech) and see exactly what made your best and worst designs so good or bad, respectively.

WEAPON CHOICES

One of the biggest design decisions you'll make is what weapons to load on your 'Mech. There's a lot of room for personal choice in weapons selection, so we recommend that you read Chapter 2 thoroughly and try every weapon for yourself in Instant Action mode.

That said, here are some suggestions on what weapons to load on your 'Mechs.

WEAPON TRUISMS

We'll start out with some general truths about weapons. These aren't specific suggestions on whether to load any particular weapon, but rather, general guidelines to understand and follow. Bear these in mind as you select a weapons set for your 'Mech.

SIMILAR WEAPONS ARE EASY TO GROUP AND MANAGE

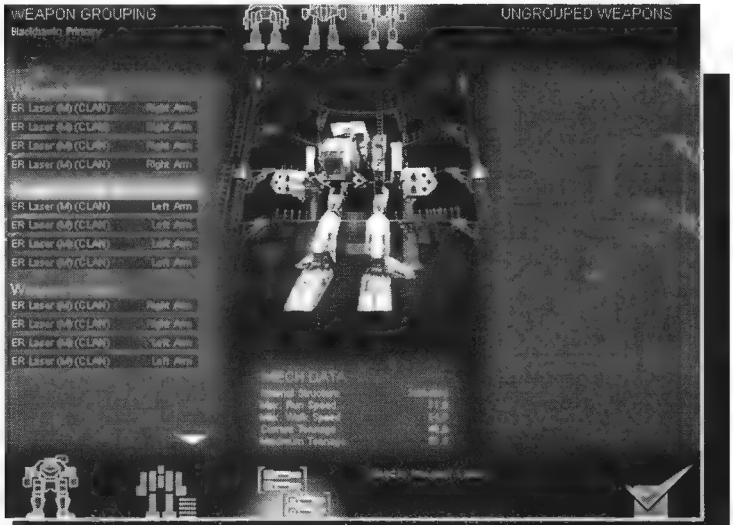


Figure 4-14. Big groups of identical weapons are easy to manage.

As you add weapons to your 'Mech, you should bear in mind the difficulty of managing several weapon types at once.

As we'll explain in Chapter 6, juggling several weapon groups is tough, especially under fire. Therefore you want to keep your total number of weapon groups low.

You'll also want to group homogenous weapons together. Groups that include several different weapon types are hard to aim; for example, a group including both lasers and missiles forces you to wait for a missile lock before group-firing, which slows down the speed with which you can shoot the lasers. Also, the optimal place to aim the lasers may be different from the optimal place to aim the missiles. And finally, differences in recycle time (the time it takes for each weapon to recharge after firing) can be confusing. So you'll want to group Medium Lasers with Medium Lasers, LRMs with LRMs, and so forth. Occasionally you can break the rules, but homogenous weapon groups are usually best.

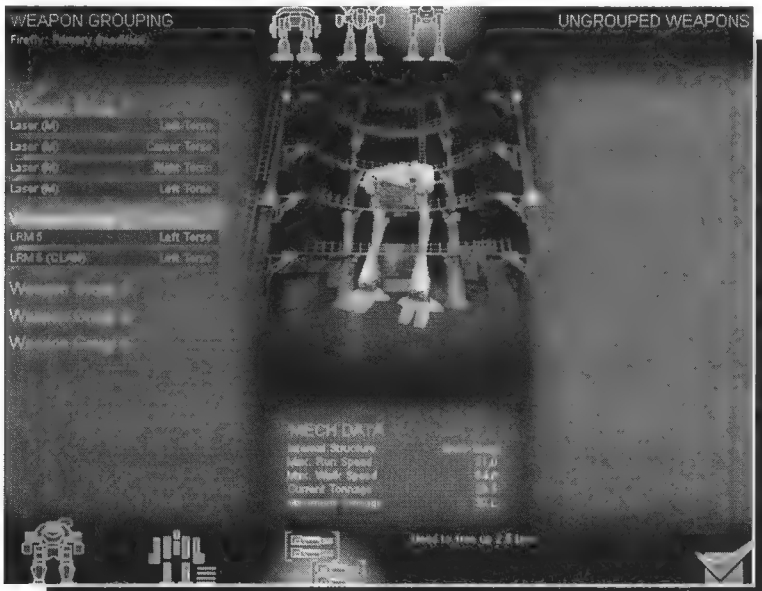
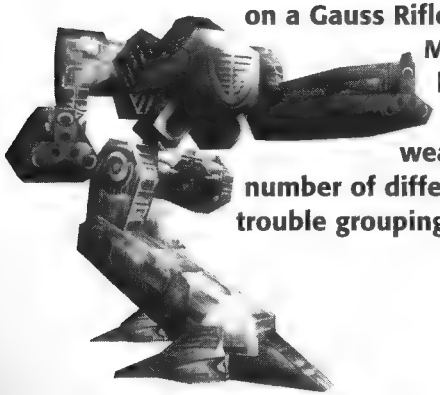


Figure 4-15. This 'Mech has only two weapon groups, each with its own specific range. This makes it an easy 'Mech to fight with.

Add these facts together and you'll see that it's best to use only a few different weapons systems on your 'Mech, and pile on *lots* of those systems. Instead of packing on a Gauss Rifle, an LRM 5, a Medium Laser, a SRM 6, and a Machine Gun (five different weapons types), you'd be better off to just use an LRM 20, an LRM 10, and five Medium Lasers (essentially only two weapons types, as LRMs are all the same). Keep the number of different weapons systems low, and you'll have little trouble grouping them.



LONG-RANGE WEAPONS COME IN HANDY

Figure 4-16. A few long-range weapons are useful, though it's tough to survive if *all* your weapons are geared toward extreme range.

Long-range weapons are handy for a number of reasons. Let's look at a few of them.

First, in campaign missions you'll often face fortified enemy emplacements. The fortifications usually include turrets of some description. If you have long-range weapons you can usually pick these turrets off from a distance where they can't fight back.

Second, because your enemies don't all possess long-range weapons, you can often damage them at ranges where they can't fight back effectively. Sometimes you can even destroy them before they get close enough to bring their best weapons to bear.

Third, you tend to take less damage in long-range fights than at close range. This is particularly true in campaign missions, but it's true in multiplayer as well. If you can fight effectively at long range, you have an advantage over your competition.

Last, but not least, understand that you can't always dictate the range of a fight. If your 'Mech isn't a real speed demon, you'll find that smaller, faster 'Mechs can run away from you or maintain range at will, while you're stuck fighting on their terms. If you don't have long-range weapons, the enemy can pick away at you and there's little you can do about it.

Because of these benefits, it's recommended that you always pack at least a couple of long-range weapons, especially in campaign missions. If nothing else, you can use them to pick off turrets and other fortified emplacements at long range.

In multiplayer games, you don't absolutely need long-range weapons, as you can (to some degree) dictate the range of battle by hiding behind terrain features and engaging foes at close range—but you've got to be good, and your 'Mech has to be nimble enough to close the gap if your enemies try to separate.

MEDIUM-RANGE WEAPONS ARE A SOLID MAINSTAY

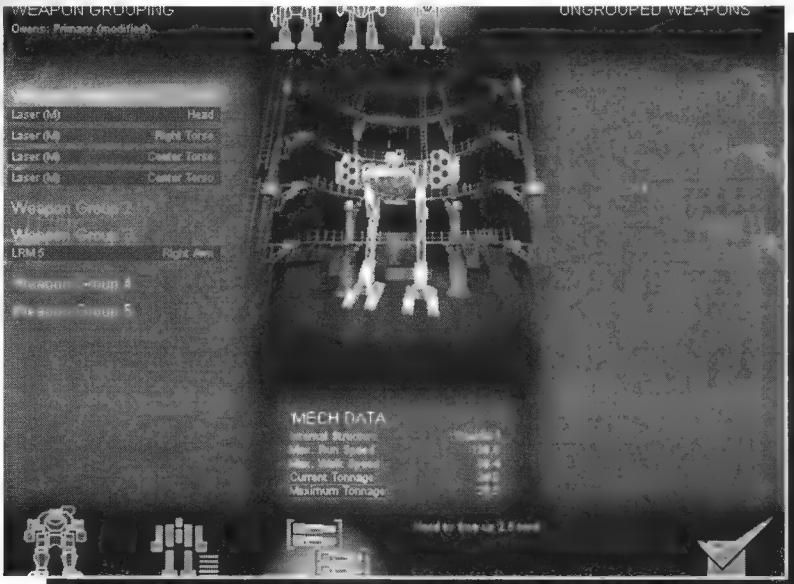


Figure 4-17. Because medium-range weapons are lighter than long-range weapons, you can pack on more of them and deal more damage—provided that your target is within range.

After reading the stirring praise of long-range weapons in the last section, you might be surprised to find that we recommend medium-range weapons for the bulk of your 'Mech's arsenal. A few long-range weapons are always good, but making them central to your 'Mech can lead to problems, especially in the single-player campaign. First, while most 'Mech battles tend to start at long range, they almost always close to medium or short range. That's natural, because both 'Mechs tend to be in motion to avoid getting hit, and it's hard to aim at an enemy if your back is turned to him. Add in the fact that most 'Mechs can use most of their weapons systems at mid to close range, and you'll see why battles almost always close to those ranges.

If your only weapons are long-range, you'd better hurt the enemy before he closes in—because your long-range weapons are ill equipped to deal with him up close. Some long-range weapons, like LRMs, are not only difficult to aim up close, but they won't do any damage at short range because the missiles won't have time to arm.

Second, understand that even though some long-range weapons can be successfully fired at a close-range foe, your long-range weapons put you at a disadvantage because they cost more (in tonnage or heat generation) than medium-range weapons. Thus, an enemy that loaded up on lighter, medium-range weapons is likely to have more weapons than you, with your heavy long-range weapons. As a result he can dish out more destruction, provided that he gets to a range where his weapons are effective.

Don't kid yourself about being able to maintain long range throughout an entire fight. It's very tough unless you have an extremely light, fast 'Mech—and even then, you need the discipline to run at the appropriate times, never allowing the enemy to get close. The moral of the story? In most situations, your mainstay weapons—the ones you close out most fights with—will be medium or even short range.

SHORT-RANGE WEAPONS ARE LIMITED

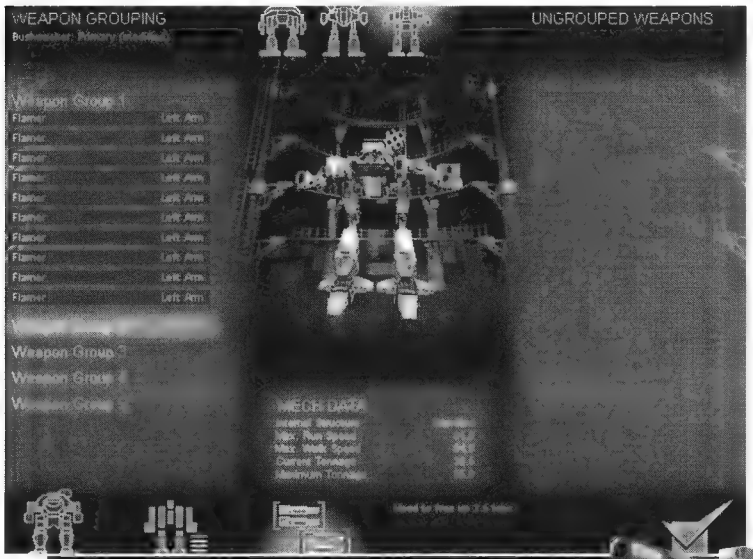


Figure 4-18. Short-range weapons can be potent, but you'll need to compensate for their drawbacks.

Some of the most powerful weapons in the game (including the Ultra Autocannon 20) have fairly limited range. That's fine; the Ultra Autocannon 20 is potent enough to compensate for its limited range—and besides, at 360 meters, it isn't *severely* limited.

Some weapons, however, have such limited ranges that you should think twice before adding them to your 'Mech, and *definitely* think twice before making them a main weapons system. The Small Laser, Flamer, and Machine Gun fall into this category. It's OK to throw a few such weapons onto your 'Mech for use in extremely close combat situations, especially against small targets like Elementals, but you should be cautious about including these weapons in your design. They require you to get *extremely* close to the enemy, who may or may not decide to cooperate, and getting close to enemies subjects you to lots of damage.

BALLISTIC WEAPONS ARE HARDEST TO AIM

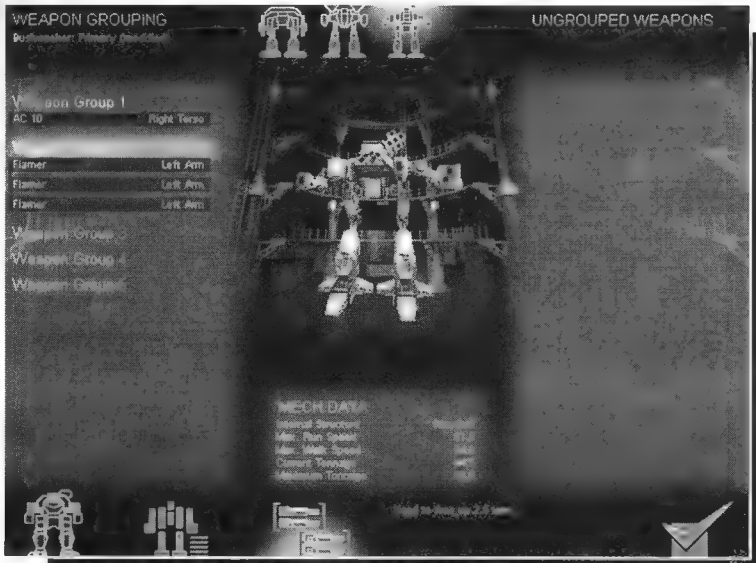
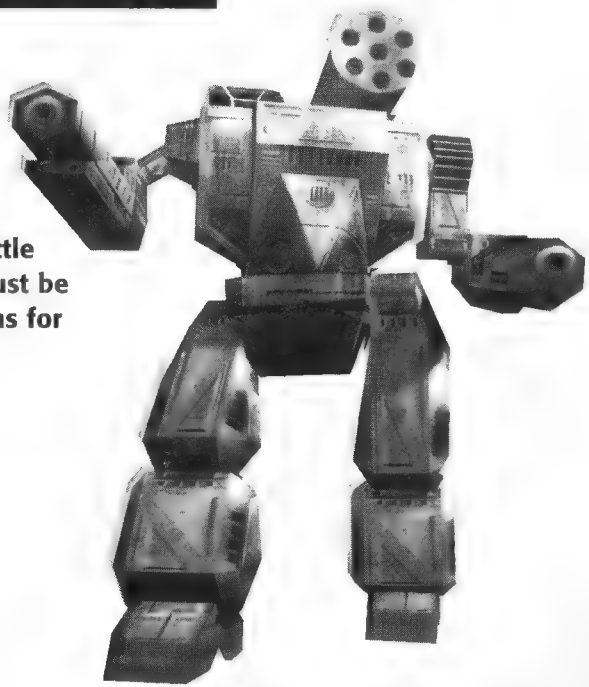


Figure 4-19. Ballistic weapons like this Autocannon 10 are harder to aim than lasers.

Lasers hit their mark instantaneously, and missiles home in on their targets after you've acquired a lock. Ballistic weapons such as Autocannons and the Gauss Rifle, on the other hand, fire projectiles that take a little while to reach their target. This means you have to lead a moving target.

Ultimately, you need to be a good shot to hit the mark with Autocannons and Gauss Rifles. (Machine Guns are the exception, as they hit the mark instantaneously.)

Don't give up on these weapons; a little practice will do wonders for your aim. Just be aware that these aren't the best weapons for MechWarriors with poor aim.

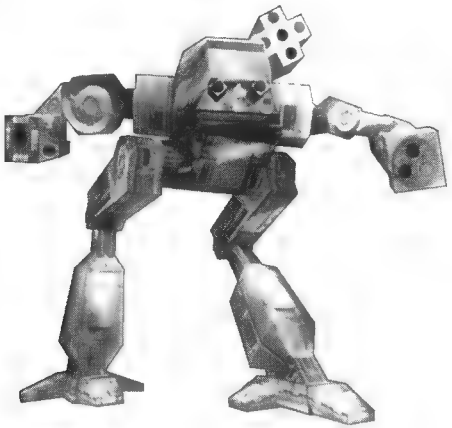


IT'S EASIEST TO SPECIALIZE IN ONE DISTANCE

Figure 4-20. This 'Mech, with its plethora of Medium Lasers, is easy to pilot. You'll always know what range to fight at.

While there's a certain appeal to versatility, you'll have the easiest time figuring out what to do if most of your weapons are effective at a particular range. If they tend to be long-range, you'll know that you should maintain distance from your target whenever possible, and perhaps run backwards as you fight instead of charging toward the enemy. If your weapons are relatively short-range, you'll want to use large terrain features to hide until the enemy is within your range.

Usually, the best policy is to specialize in weapons with decent, but not incredible, range (480 meters is good) because you pay more in tonnage to load up on long-range weapons. Then, add in a few longer-range weapons for sniping, and for picking off emplaced defenses from afar.



TIP

You can specialize in long or short range, and if you can pull it off, that's great—but we've already covered some of the difficulties inherent in those choices. You'll have to work to keep enemies out of the ranges that you can't deal with.

SMALLER 'MECHS CAN'T HANDLE BALLISTIC WEAPONS

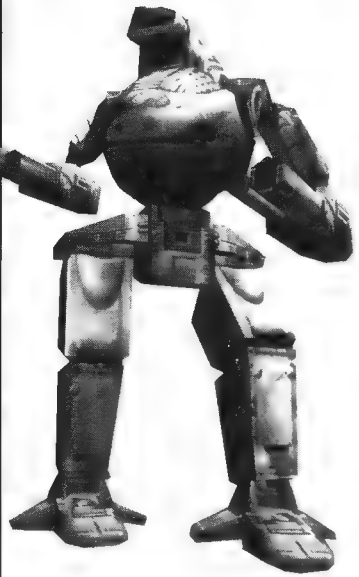


Figure 4-21. Small 'Mechs like this Firefly can handle one or two ballistic weapons, but only after sacrificing other aspects of the design—so it's usually not worth it.

Very small 'Mechs have a tough time loading Autocannons and Gauss Rifles, simply because they're so heavy. Energy weapons such as lasers are much lighter. The tradeoff, of course, is the extra heat generated by energy weapons—but when your 'Mech is light, you'll usually have to bite the bullet and go for those energy weapons despite the heat. Small 'Mechs just don't have the room for heavy Autocannons *and* their ammo.

GROUPS OF SMALL WEAPONS CAN EQUAL LARGER WEAPONS' PUNCH

Figure 4-22. This group of Small Lasers, when group-fired, deals damage equal to a much heavier weapon.

The very largest weapons in the game are attractive because of their incredible power, but you can get almost the same results by group-firing several smaller weapons. The very heaviest weapons (like Autocannon 20s) still have a marginally better chance of knocking out the enemy quickly, but they're so ammo-intensive that you're more likely to get good results from smaller weapons in a campaign mission.

THE HEAVIEST WEAPONS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE IN MULTIPLAYER

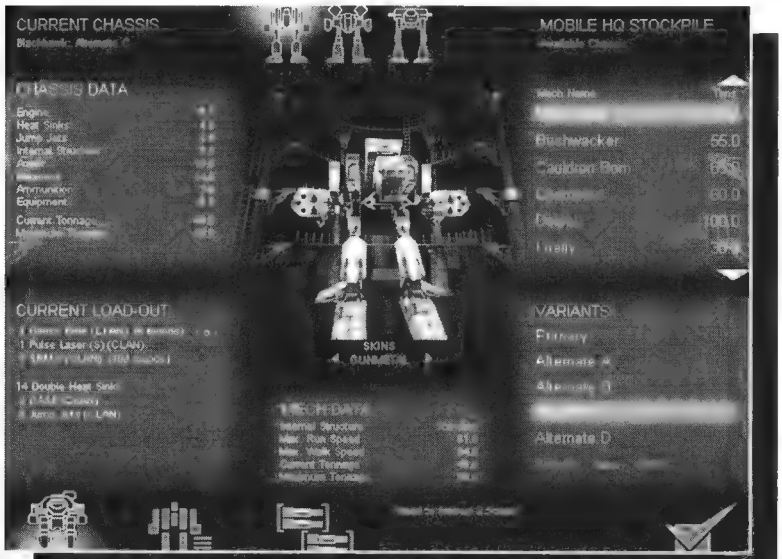


Figure 4-23. Heavy weapons like this Gauss Rifle are critical in multiplayer games, where battles are often decided in a split second.

Whereas groups of small weapons are good in most campaign missions, a few massive weapons can really put you over the top in multiplayer games. In multiplayer, you don't need to take on the vast hordes of small enemies that you do in

many single-player campaign missions (so ammunition needs are lower). Plus, your human enemies tend to pick you apart very quickly—so you need to pick *them* apart even faster.

YOU NEED ENERGY WEAPONS!

Especially in campaign missions, be sure to include at least one or two energy weapons, even if your 'Mech design calls for mainly ballistic weapons or missiles. Even a single Medium Laser allows you to pick away at stationary targets (typically, mission objectives) without wasting valuable ammo. Sure, it may take a long time to destroy a factory with a single Medium Laser, but if ammo is low, it's worth the time investment.

WEAPON SUGGESTIONS

Now that we've covered a number of truisms about weapons and weapons selection, we'll give a few pieces of concrete advice. The suggestions listed below by no means represent the only way to successfully equip your 'Mech, but they are tried and true, and will work for just about anyone.

PULSE LASERS AS A CENTERPIECE

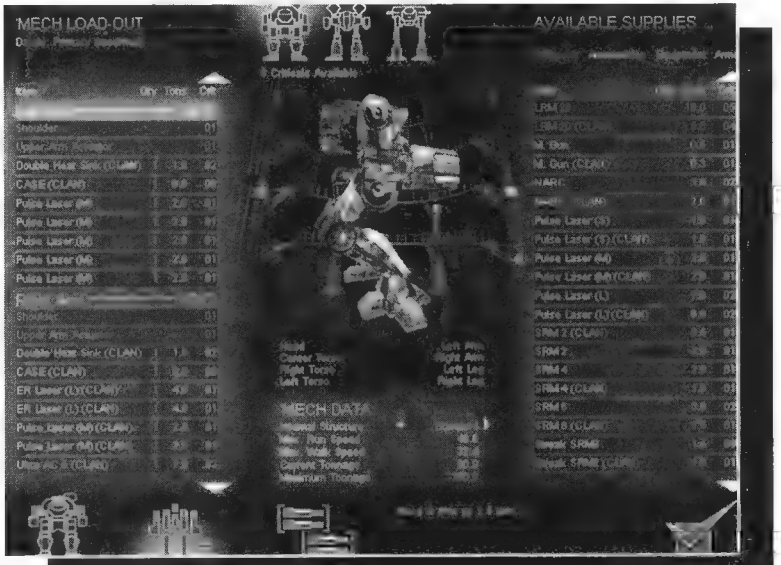


Figure 4-24. Large batteries of Medium Pulse Lasers make an effective main weapons system.

If you're searching for a centerpiece weapon—a mainstay that will serve you well throughout the entire campaign—you'll find one in Pulse Lasers. 'Mechs that feature a large battery of Medium or Large Pulse Lasers, Clan or otherwise, are a formidable threat. They need lots of heat sinks to be effective, but when properly equipped,

'Mechs that are group-firing Pulse Lasers can deal massive damage at decent range quickly. Pulse Lasers won't run out of ammo, and they're extremely versatile.

Pulse Lasers fire multiple shots if you hold down the trigger, so you can deal lots of damage and still have a good chance of hitting the mark. Regular lasers are a good alternative if you're a steady shot, but for people with less-than-stellar aiming ability, Pulse Lasers give a greater margin for error.

Also, with Pulse Lasers you can hold down the trigger for a variable amount of time, depending on the amount of damage you want to deal. If you kill the target with the first burst of fire, you can simply let up on the trigger and the weapons will be ready to fire again almost instantly. Compare this with regular lasers, which deal all their damage immediately and generate all their heat instantly. With these, you must incur all the weapons' heat and wait through their entire recycle time before you can fire again, even if you're firing at a target that hardly warrants the weapons' full power.

Pulse Lasers become more common as the campaigns progress. Initially, you'll have to make do with regular lasers; then, you can slowly integrate Pulse Lasers as they become available.

LRMS OR ER LASERS FOR CAMPAIGN MISSIONS

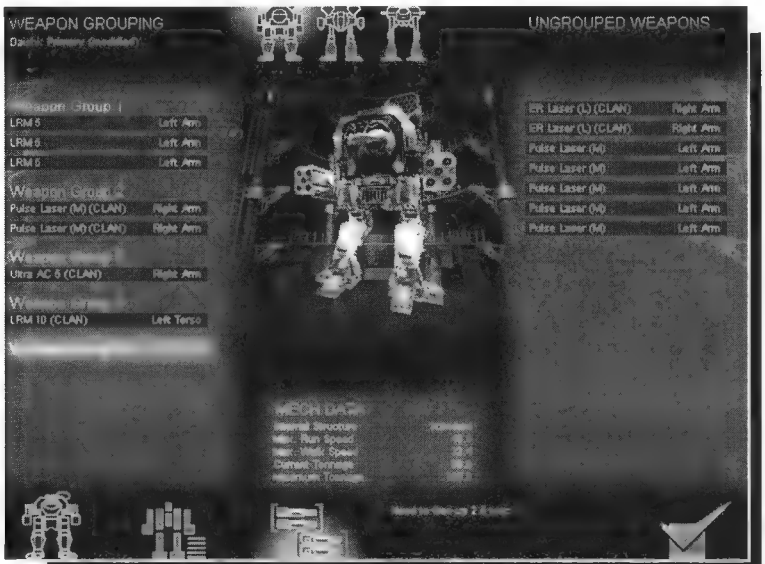

WEAPON GROUPING
UNGROUPED WEAPONS
LRM 5 Left Arm
LRM 5 Left Arm
LRM 5 Left Arm
Pulse Laser (M) (CLAN) Right Arm
Pulse Laser (M) (CLAN) Right Arm
Ultra AC 5 (CLAN) Right Arm
LRM 10 (CLAN) Left Torso
ER Laser (L) (CLAN) Right Arm
ER Laser (L) (CLAN) Right Arm
Pulse Laser (M) Left Arm
Pulse Laser (M) Left Arm
Pulse Laser (M) Left Arm
Pulse Laser (M) Left Arm
Pulse Laser (M) Left Arm
MECH DATA

Figure 4-25. A few long-range weapons, like these LRM 5s, will help greatly in campaign missions.

LRMs are good long-range campaign weapons. They're useful for picking off stationary targets from afar, and for softening up incoming enemies before they get too close.

LRMs suffer in multiplayer games because your foes tend to be smart enough to load up on multiple AMSs (Anti-Missile Systems). A 'Mech with three or four AMSs can shoot

large volleys of missiles out of the air, so you won't get very far shooting missiles at it. The 'Mechs you'll face in campaign missions, on the other hand, tend to have only one AMS at most. This allows the benefits of LRMs—the homing capabilities and the relative lightness for a long-range weapon—to really shine.

AUTOCANNONS FOR MULTIPLAYER

When playing multiplayer games, feel free to load up on heavy Autocannons. Nothing equals the punch of an Ultra Autocannon 20 at close range; heavy Autocannons are the sort of weapons that knock opposing BattleMechs down or tear off limbs with one shot. You can use that sort of power in multiplayer games.

SPECIAL MISSION CONSIDERATIONS

Figure 4-26. Streak SRMs are very useful against fast targets.

Every so often you might want to alter your 'Mech's payload to account for special mission circumstances. For example, if you think you're going to face lots of LRM turrets, you might want to load up on Large ER Lasers, which have a longer range than any other weapon. Then you can gun down the turrets safely.

Also, if you're going to face lots of Elementals or small, fast vehicles, you might want to invest in Streak SRMs, which are very accurate. That way you'll be able to pick off your nimble opponents quickly and efficiently.

WEAPON PLACEMENT

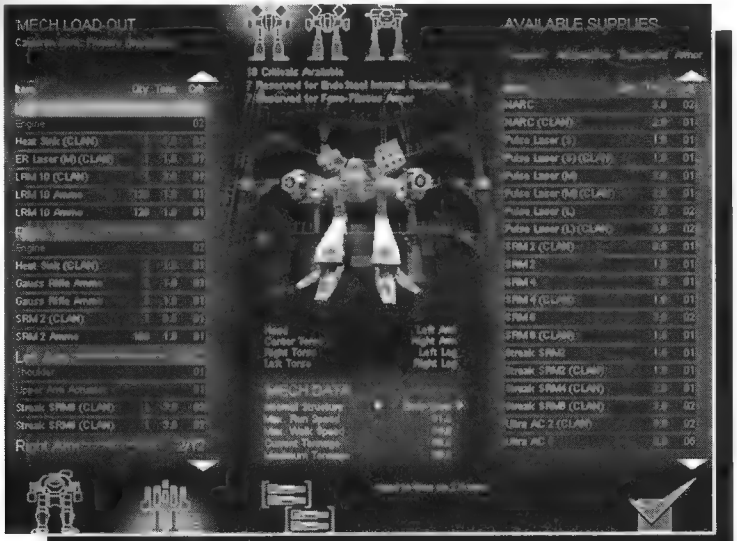


Figure 4-27. The left or right torso is generally the safest place for your weapons.

Aside from which weapons to use, there's also the question of where on your 'Mech to place them. Here are a few general guidelines for weapon placement.

The torso is generally the safest place for weapons. If any section of a 'Mech's torso gets destroyed, it's in serious trouble anyway—you'll have bigger issues to worry about than weapon loss. Arms, on the other hand, are nonessential. Placing weapons in arms tends to make them more vulnerable to enemy fire.

Of course, there are complicating factors. First, if you use your View controls to look left, and then torso twist all the way to the left, you can effectively look and shoot at targets directly behind your 'Mech. The same is true if you look right and then torso twist all the way to the right. However, you can only fire at the enemy with weapons on the side that's facing the enemy. So if you're looking left, you can only fire weapons on the left arm and left torso toward the enemy. If you're looking right, you can only fire weapons on the right arm and right torso toward the enemy.

If you tend to frequently look left or right so you can fire at targets behind you, you might want to think about which way you typically look (most MechWarriors favor one side or the other) and then load your best weapons on that side.

One final thing to consider: Most human pilots will target fragile areas like the legs, or crucial areas like the head, before going after a 'Mech's arms. Therefore, your arm-mounted weapons may be safer in multiplayer games than they would be in campaign missions.

EQUIPMENT

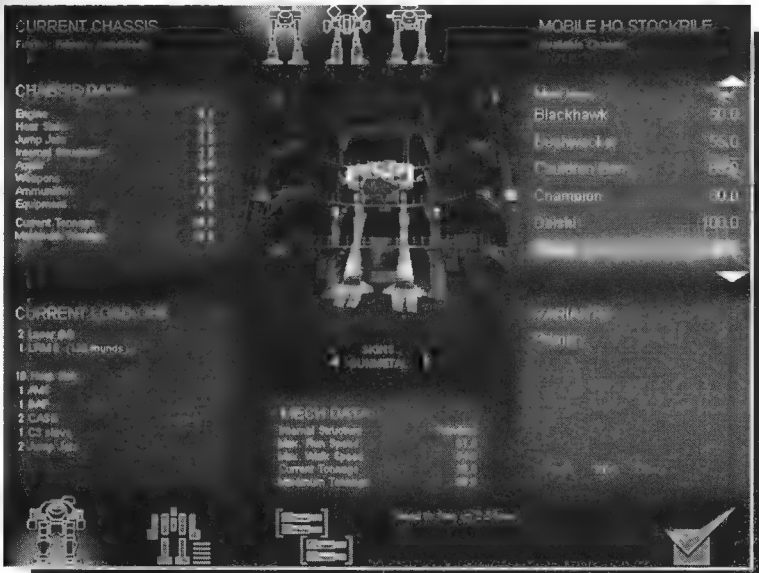
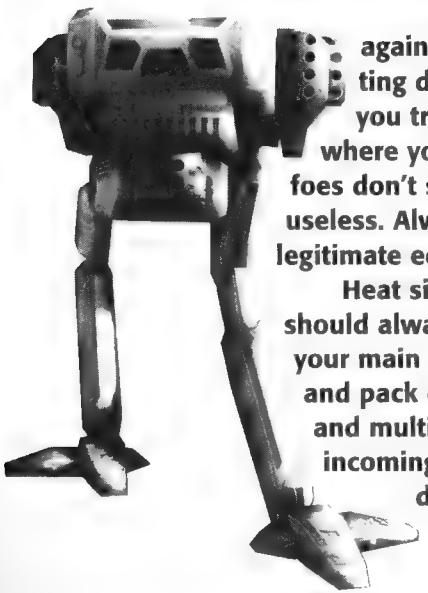


Figure 4-28. Don't go overboard with equipment, as this 'Mech has.

The equipment that you load on your 'Mech is entirely up to you. But as usual, we'll offer a few suggestions.

First, don't go overboard with equipment. Heat sinks are crucial, but many pieces of equipment, such as the Beagle Active Probe, aren't entirely necessary. The Beagle Probe will help you the first time you try a campaign mission, and against multiplayer foes that actively seek to hide by shutting down their 'Mechs. On the other hand, the second time you try a campaign mission you'll have a better sense of where your enemies are coming from. Also, if your multiplayer foes don't shut their 'Mechs down much, the Beagle Probe will be useless. Always ask yourself: Is this equipment going to give me a legitimate edge over my enemies? If not, don't take it.



Heat sinks and the AMS are two pieces of equipment you should always load in multiples. Pack on enough heat sinks to fire your main weapon groups over and over without shutting down, and pack on two (perhaps even three) AMSs for both campaign and multiplayer missions. AMSs largely negate the effects of incoming missiles, and any extra defense you can muster is definitely worthwhile.

CUSTOMIZING 'MECHS FOR LANCEMATES

The 'Mechs you give your lancemates should be slightly different from the 'Mechs you pilot yourself, because of the differences between your role and the lancemate's role, and also the limitations of computer-controlled pilots.

MAKE 'EM DURABLE

One similarity your lancemates' 'Mechs should share with your 'Mechs is durability. Pack on as much armor as possible. Lancemates have a knack for getting themselves into sticky situations, and they'll need the extra protection.

MAKE 'EM MOBILE

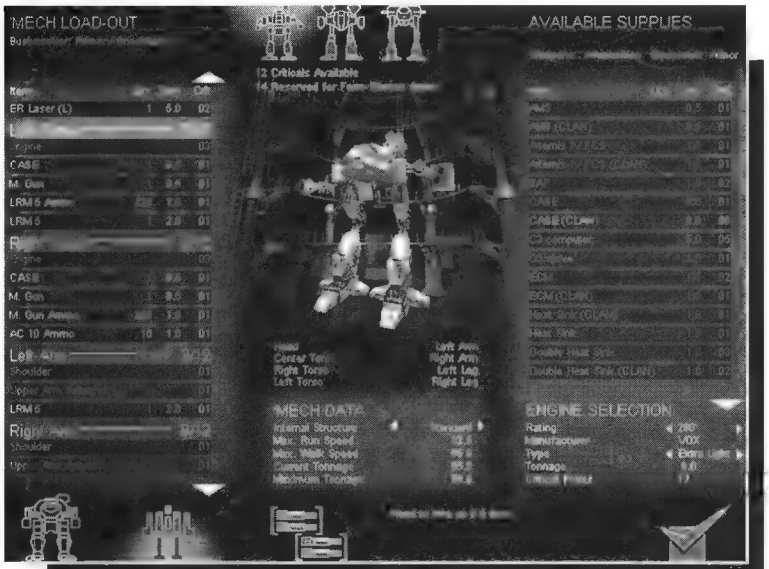


Figure 4-29. A lancemate's 'Mech should be at least as fast as your own—preferably, a bit faster.

If your lancemate's 'Mech is slower than your 'Mech, he or she will have a tough time keeping up with you. This causes all sorts of problems. Try to make sure, therefore, that your lancemates pilot BattleMechs that are at least as fast and maneuverable as yours.

Speed is also useful when you want your lancemate to absorb some punishment. Because enemies tend to focus on you rather than your lancemate, it's often a good idea to order the lancemate to attack. Meanwhile, you should hang slightly back from the main action. If your lancemate is fast, he'll charge ahead of you and absorb some of the damage that would otherwise all be directed at your 'Mech. Better yet, with his extra speed he might avoid some of that damage altogether.

USE LONG-RANGE WEAPONS

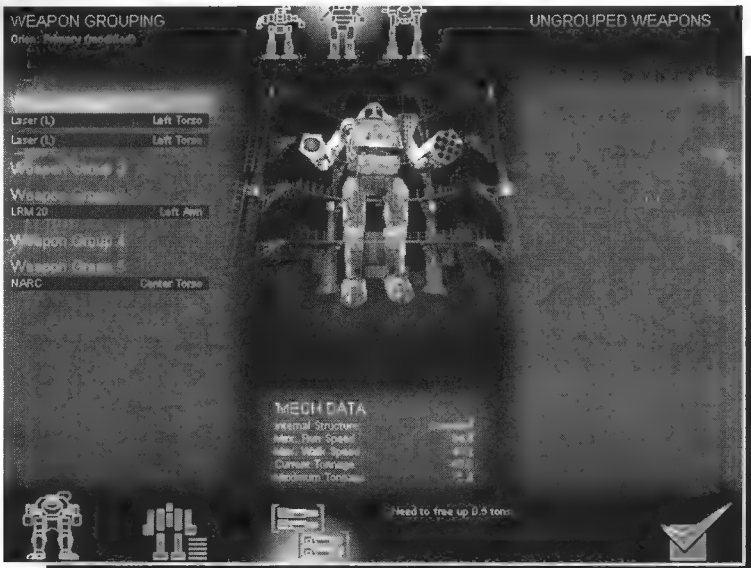


Figure 4-30. Relatively long-range weapons like these Large Lasers ensure that your lancemates can lend fire support even if they aren't in a perfect position.

Because lancemates spend a lot of time at your side, you want to make sure that their weapons can reach distant targets. Even if you cut them loose to attack on their own, lancemates burdened with Machine Guns and Flamers will sometimes spend more time jockeying for position and trying to sidle up to the enemy than actually firing. Give them weapons with decent range, therefore, so they can fire at will.

AVOID LIMITED AMMO

You can't trust your lancemates to exercise the same discretion with ammo that you do. *You* know that your Autocannon 20 ammo is precious. *You* know that it'd be a complete waste to fire the Autocannon 20 at a stationary ammo depot that can't fight back. Your lancemates, however, are a different story. Occasionally you'll look over and notice them wasting precious Gauss Rifle ammo shooting a puny unarmed truck, or using an Autocannon to rip apart an enemy power station. The key to avoiding this sort of heartbreak is to equip your lancemates with either energy weapons, which never run out of ammo, or weapons with a healthy supply of backup ammo.

SUMMARY

BattleMech design is an art, not a science. There is no perfect way to design a 'Mech. There are, of course, guidelines, such as using as much space and tonnage as possible, and loading on weapons and gear appropriate to your combat style and the mission you're facing. Beyond that, it's all up to you.

Every time you embark on a mission, think about how you could improve your 'Mech or make it more suited to a particular task. If you find yourself wishing you had a Large ER Laser to pick off a distant turret, or some more Medium Lasers for up-close stopping power, remember it—and try to incorporate those wishes into future designs. That's the only way your 'Mechs will get better.

CHAPTER 5
MISSION PREPARATIONS AND PROCEDURES

THIS CHAPTER WILL TAKE you through a typical mission from start to finish. It's non-specific; the idea is to give you a blueprint or set of actions to follow as you proceed through the various stages of a mission. You probably won't need this chapter if you're an experienced MechWarrior, or if you're used to complex simulations. However, if you find the vast possibilities of 'Mech command confusing, you might find this set of guidelines helpful for getting on track.

INTERPRETING THE BRIEFING

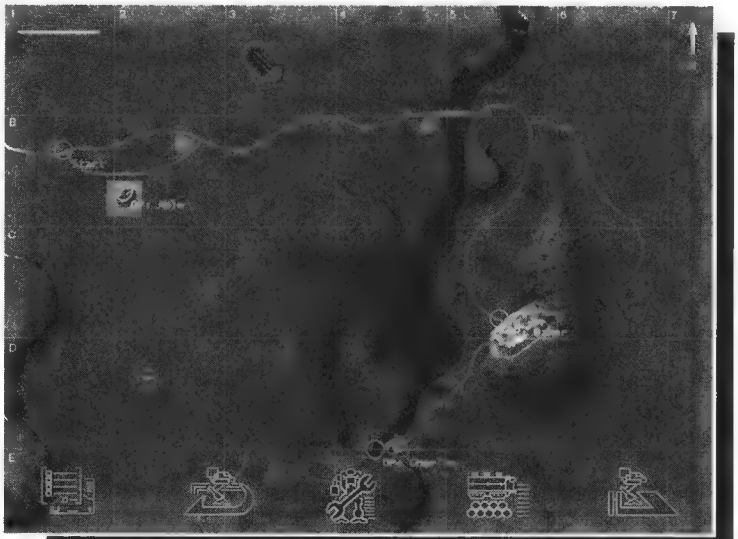


Figure 5-1. The mission briefing gives you an idea of what you're up against.

The mission starts with a briefing. As you watch the mission briefing, observe the terrain. Draw an imaginary path from your starting location to your first target, then the second, and so on. Observe the terrain features along that path, looking for spots that might make good cover. Mentally note these places; when the mission starts, you'll want to seek them out if you get overwhelmed. Also, look for obvious alternate paths—either paths that come from tackling your goals in reverse order, or from crossing the battlefield in an out-of-the-ordinary way. Sometimes these less obvious paths are easier than the obvious ones, offering less resistance or more cover.

Finally, be sure to get your objectives straight in your head. You don't want to accidentally destroy something you're supposed to defend.

ASSEMBLING A 'MECH

Your weapon and 'Mech preferences will usually dictate which 'Mechs to take, but sometimes you'll want to make concessions to the terrain or objectives of the current mission. For example, if the terrain looks wide-open, you might want to use longer-range weapons than you usually would. If the terrain looks dense and claustrophobic, short-range, heavy-hitting weapons are likely to be helpful.

Figure 5-2. Spend some time developing a 'Mech that suits your tastes *and* your mission.

Also, if the mission calls for you to attack stationary targets such as buildings, you'll want to make sure you have energy weapons. That way you won't waste ammo on noncombatant targets.

Jump jets are useful in missions that feature rough, multi-level terrain.

Also, be sure to pay attention to your lancemates' 'Mechs, assuming that you have lancemates. It's sometimes easy to forget about them, but you should equip them properly if you want to succeed. See Chapter 4 for more on equipping a 'Mech for a lancemate.

INITIAL SURVEY

Figure 5-3. The first order of business is neutralizing immediate threats to your starting position.

After the briefing and some time in the 'Mech Lab, the mission itself begins. As the mission starts, take a quick look around. Note your surroundings. Cycle through targets, and see if any enemies are nearby.

If there are any enemies very close to you, and they appear to be headed your way, don't waste time—select your favorite weapon group, get your 'Mech in

motion, and start toward them. Destroy them before moving to the next stages of your survey. Your MFBs are fragile, and you'll risk losing them if you allow enemies to overrun your starting position.

ASSESS MFBS AND LANCEMATES

Figure 5-4. Your MFBs are invaluable. If one of them falls, you should quit and try the mission again.

If there are no immediate threats, or if there were but you've successfully gotten rid of them, you should immediately locate both your lancemates and your MFBs. If the MFBs are near your starting location (as they usually are), you should be aware that you can return to them as much as you'd like for repairs and refitting. This is a valuable asset that can't be ignored; you'll make normally easy missions nearly impossible if you don't make proper use of your MFBs.

If you have at least one lancemate, it's a good idea to target him or her, then target the nearest enemy. The lancemate will remain selected for purposes of ordering. Then, if you stumble into an ambush or find yourself attacked by more enemies than you had anticipated, you can issue an Attack command to that lancemate by simply pressing F6. This is faster than using the Command Screen to issue orders—and speed is key in tough battles.

EXAMINE THE MAP

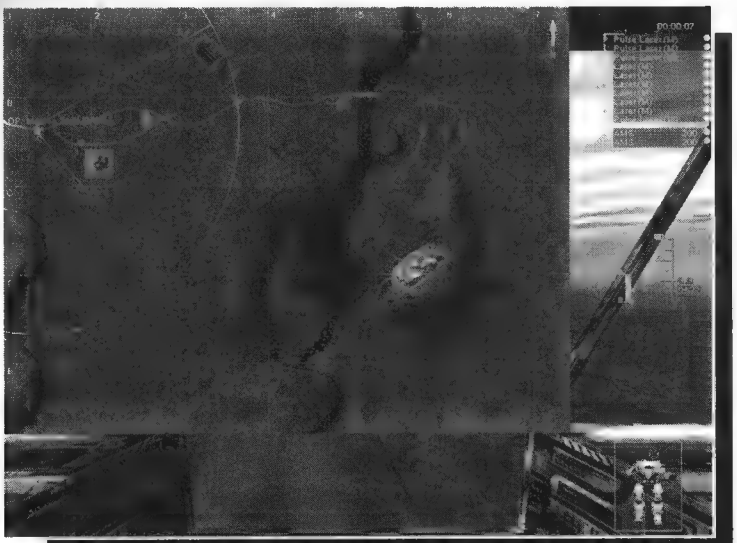


Figure 5-5. Locate your position on the map before heading toward the enemy.

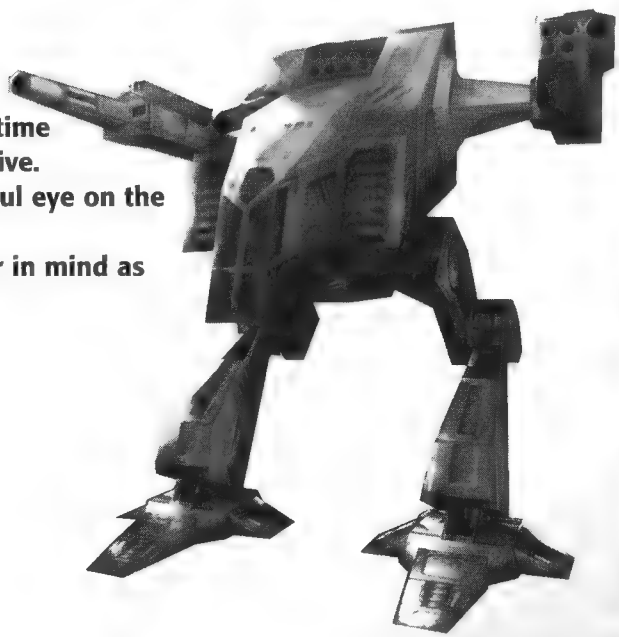
After locating your allies, you should next examine the map. Look at where you are in relation to your primary objectives, and again, mentally trace your path through the map. Try to predict where you'll encounter resistance, and where you'll go if that resistance does indeed show up.

When you've got a fairly clear mental picture of the situation, start moving toward your first objective.

EXPLORATION

Now that you've got your bearings, it's time to start moving toward your first objective. Proceed at full speed, keeping a watchful eye on the radar at all times.

Here's a few things you should bear in mind as you go.



AVOID GROUPS OF ENEMIES

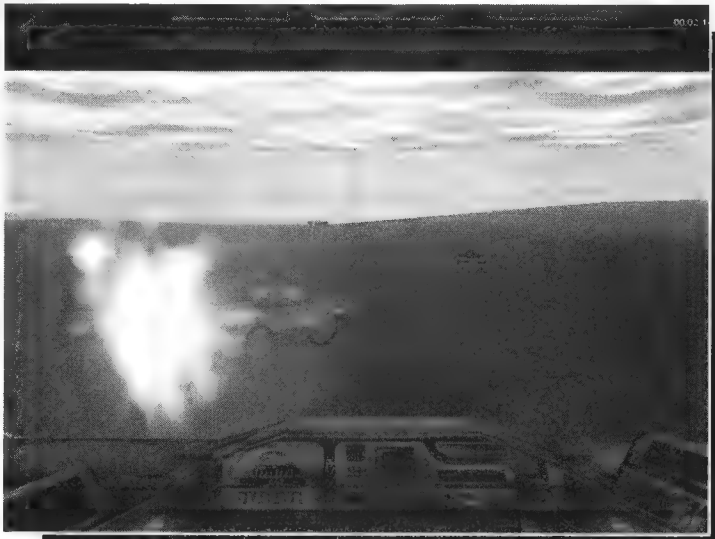
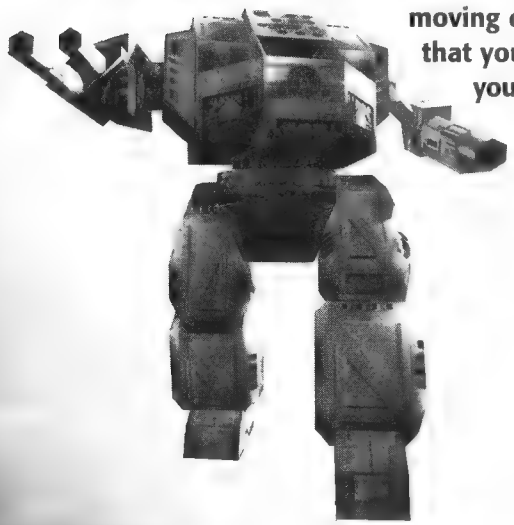


Figure 5-6. Large groups of enemies should be avoided at all costs.

The cardinal rule for staying out of trouble is avoiding large groups of enemies. You want to fight as few enemies at a time as possible; ideally, you'd only fight one enemy at a time. There are several things you can do to ensure that you don't get overwhelmed.

First, watch for enemies that pop up on radar as you move toward your objective. When they appear, you have several choices. If you can see them, you can try to pick them off with long-range weapons. If there's cover nearby, you can hide behind it and hope they approach close enough for you to ambush them. You also can hide behind cover and occasionally pop out for a burst of long-range fire, before moving back into cover.

If there's no cover, start moving laterally. If you keep moving straight toward the enemy you'll be easier to hit—but just as importantly, you'll be moving deeper into enemy territory, and increasing the risk that you'll uncover still more enemies. That's not a good idea; you want to destroy the current batch of enemies before locating new ones.



If you do manage to uncover more enemies than you feel comfortable fighting, you should retreat and seek cover as quickly as possible. By taking cover, you can reduce the number of enemies firing at you at once. This makes the battle more manageable.

CLEAR AS YOU GO

Figure 5-7. Even seemingly innocuous enemies, like this out-of-the-way turret, should be destroyed.

When you encounter a new enemy, you should usually do your best to get rid of it immediately—unless that means going deep enough into enemy territory that you're likely to be ambushed, or putting your 'Mech in view of a particularly nasty turret. If that's the case, you should hold off.

Enemies that you leave around, even those that seem to be well out of the way and not very threatening, can cause you problems later if they decide to attack when you're occupied with other enemies. So clear out enemies methodically as you go—even vehicles that seem content to ignore you, or turrets in seemingly out-of-the-way spots.

RETURN FOR REPAIRS

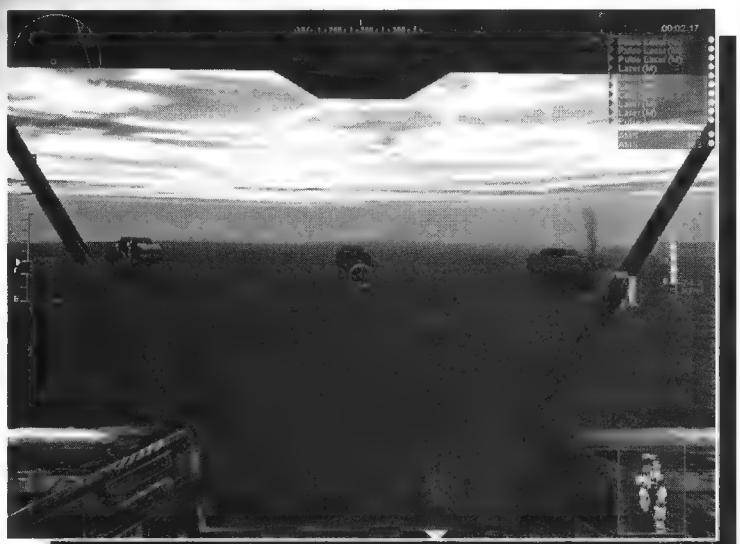
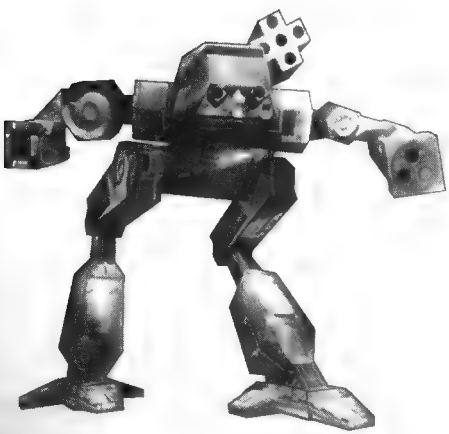


Figure 5-8. The value of your MFBs can't be overstated.

Never forget that you and your lancemates can return to your MFBs for repairs. It can be a pain to repair your 'Mechs, especially if the MFBs are far away and your 'Mechs aren't very fast. However, you should get into the habit of returning for repairs whenever your 'Mech has significant armor damage. It's well worth it, and it often means the difference between success and failure.

ACCOMPLISHING OBJECTIVES

When you approach your objectives, things aren't always as they seem. Here's a look at how to proceed when you find yourself in the vicinity of a major objective.



TIP

These tips pertain to objectives you must *destroy*. This is the most common sort of objective. Missions requiring you to defend a target are much less common; for instructions on beating those missions, refer to particular mission walkthroughs in Chapters 7 through 10.

APPROACH DEPENDING ON THE TARGET

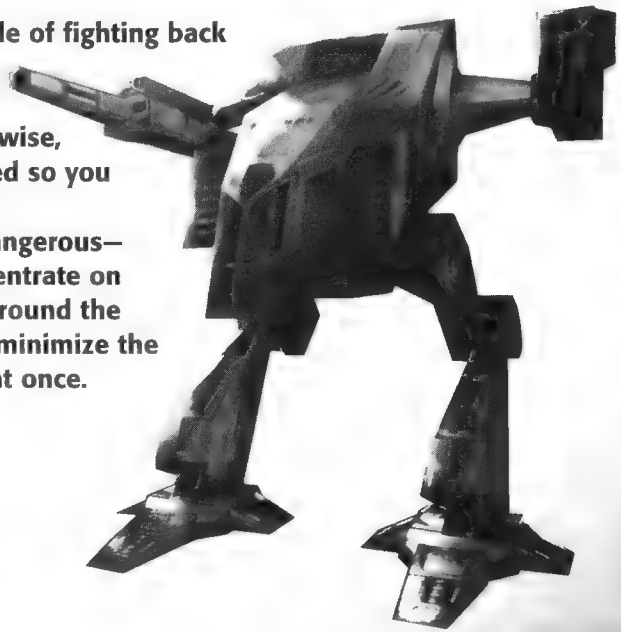
Figure 5-9. Approach this missile platform from outside its arc of fire.

If your target is stationary and incapable of fighting back (say, a power plant or 'Mech production facility), you can approach it in any way you'd like. In this case, you'll probably approach it from the direction that gives you the most cover against potential enemies or the best view of the target, whichever you prefer.

If your target is stationary and capable of fighting back (say, a missile platform), you'll either want to approach it from a direction where it can't "see" you (due to cover or its limited range of fire) or destroy it from outside its effective range.

If your target is mobile but incapable of fighting back (say, a convoy of trucks), you should approach it in such a way that you can cut off the obvious escape route. Otherwise, you'll have to approach with great speed so you can stay abreast of the fleeing targets.

If your target is both mobile and dangerous—say, an enemy 'Mech—you should concentrate on meticulously clearing out enemies all around the target's location before charging in, to minimize the number of foes you'll have to take on at once.



CLEAR THE AREA

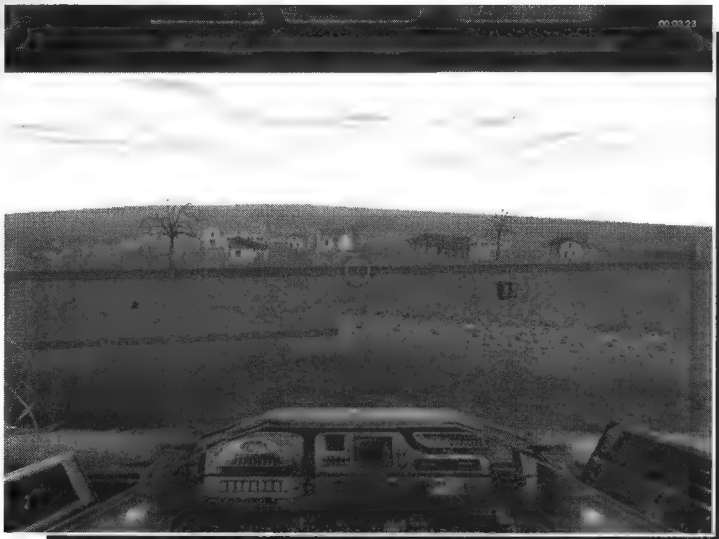


Figure 5-10. With all enemies cleared away, you can simply walk into this Jaguar base and take control.

Regardless of what sort of target you're facing, you should clear enemies from the general vicinity before worrying about it. Don't bother taking down a power plant, for example, while Elementals are swarming around your feet. Clear out the enemies thoroughly, make sure no more are on the way, and *then* turn your attention to completing your objective.

ACCOMPLISH YOUR GOAL

When the coast is clear, accomplish your goal. Try to do this the smart way: If your task is to destroy a target, don't stand too close if it might explode, and don't waste ammo on it. Use lasers or other energy weapons, which you can fire indefinitely.

TIP

The only exception to this rule is when your mission must be accomplished under time pressure. In this case, you might want to hit and run, taking out the target and ignoring any enemies that you can safely ignore.

ANTICIPATE SURPRISES

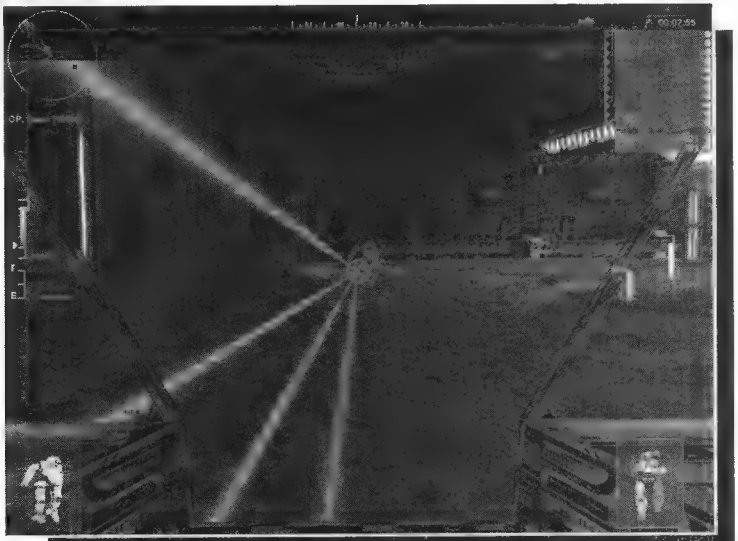


Figure 5-11. Surprises, like this Smoke Jaguar commander, should be anticipated.

Be aware that your mission briefing is often incomplete, and surprises are always possible. Surprises are simply part of the campaign, and they usually seem to happen as you approach your mission objectives.

Surprises usually come in two varieties. The first type of surprise is a threat you hadn't expected—often, a very tough enemy or even a large group of enemies. The other major category of surprise is changed or altered mission objectives. Occasionally you'll find that a new objective has appeared in the middle of a mission—for example, if you stumble across an important Smoke Jaguar commander, you might receive an additional objective: Destroy him.

Be prepared for surprises, and get ready to alter your mission plan accordingly.

ENDGAME

If you're successful in completing your primary objectives, you can usually exit from the mission area immediately. However, this isn't always the best policy. Here are some tips for wrapping up a mission.

CHECK OBJECTIVES

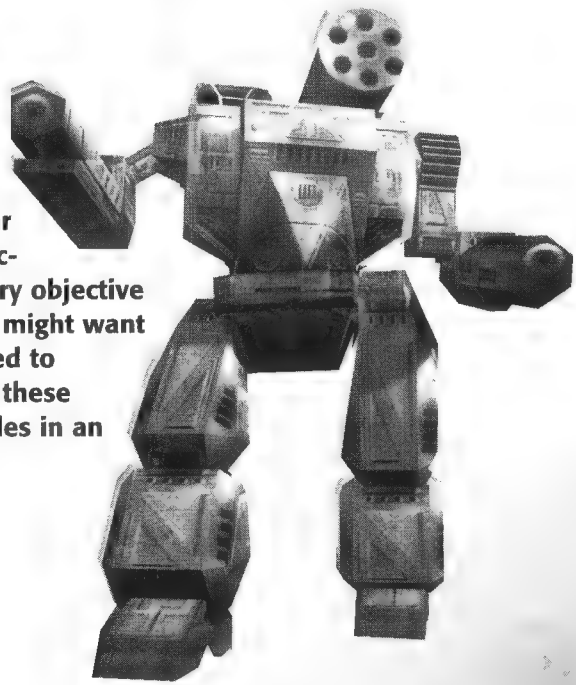
Figure 5-12. Make sure all your objectives are complete before exiting the mission area.

Before exiting the mission, make sure that you have completed all secondary mission objectives as well as the primaries. Those secondary objectives will net you bonus points. Plus, they might garner you some extra salvage.

Generally speaking, there's no reason not to complete your secondary objectives, unless you're physically incapable (for example, if a convoy of trucks you were supposed to destroy got away). Your 'Mech's condition shouldn't be a concern, as you can always repair at your MFBs before seeking out and completing secondary objectives.

MOP UP STRAGGLERS

The most common secondary objective in any mission is to destroy all Smoke Jaguar forces. If you complete your primary objectives you'll usually complete this secondary objective in the process. If you don't, however, you might want to go mop up any stragglers that you failed to destroy on the first time through. Usually these stragglers consist of lone 'Mechs or vehicles in an unexplored section of the map.



PROCEED TO THE FINISH

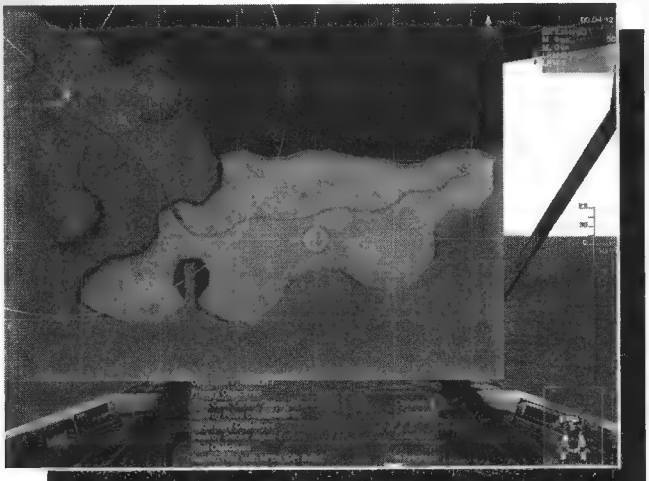


Figure 5-13. Keep going until you reach the exit point.

If necessary, proceed to the exit point to complete your mission. If no exit point is given, you can just quit out of the mission and still be successful.

Watch for surprises as you near the mission's exit point. You can't let your guard down until you're out!

SUMMARY

This chapter was designed to give you a very general blueprint for how to conduct a mission, rather than specific details on any particular aspect of the game. The rest of the book deals with specifics, so if you have questions about a particular 'Mech, weapon, vehicle, tactic, or mission, you can refer to the appropriate chapter for help.

The most important tips you should have gained from this chapter were:

1. You should always seek to fight as few enemies as possible at one time; one-on-one fights are always preferable.
2. To further your goal of fighting only a few enemies at once, you should stop your progress into enemy territory as soon as enemies appear. Let them come to you rather than chasing them into new territory, where more enemies are probably lurking.
3. Your MFBs are an invaluable resource. Don't be afraid to use them multiple times over the course of a mission.

These are simple rules, but they're also invaluable. Remember them and follow them carefully. If you do, you'll be able to get away with breaking many other, smaller rules and still come out on top.

CHAPTER 6
COMBAT

AT THE HEART OF ANY MISSION is combat. Everything you've done up until the moment of combat is merely preparation. This is not to say that preparation is inconsequential—far from it. Your review of the mission briefing, your 'Mech customization, and your overall strategy for attacking the enemy all play major roles in your ability to succeed. But it's all for nothing if you can't succeed in combat.

There are certain things this chapter can't help you with. It can't make your aim steadier, for instance, and it can't help you master the intricacies of piloting a 'Mech in an intense fight. Only experience can solve those problems. What this chapter can do, however, is point out which skills and strategies tend to work best, and provide suggestions on how to improve those strategies. Read on for more.

TRUISMS OF 'MECH COMBAT

Any number of facts become evident to a seasoned MechWarrior—like the fact that Autocannons are harder to aim than lasers, and that Pulse Lasers are easier to aim than other lasers. But those are simply details; the following general statements pertain instead to the big picture. They're important enough that you should read them carefully—maybe even read them twice!

CONTROL CONFIGURATION IS ESSENTIAL

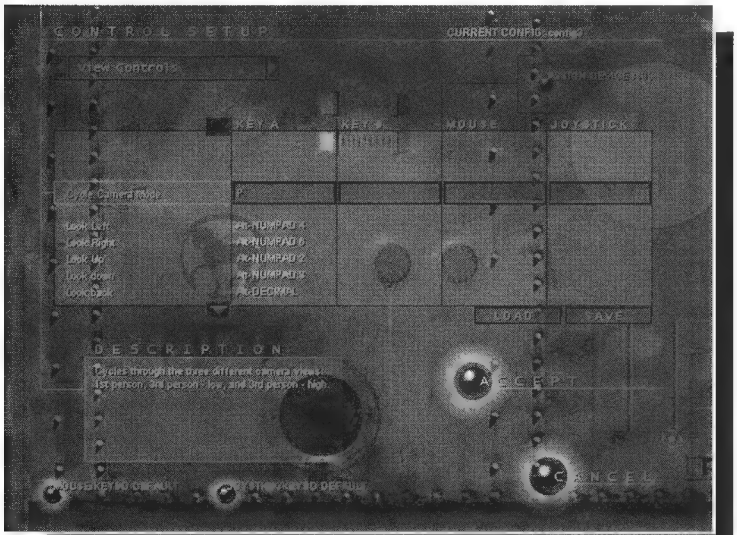


Figure 6-1. Take time to adjust your controls.

Take the time to adjust your control set-up. Ideally, your set-up should allow you to handle most essential combat functions without looking at the keyboard.

That's not to say that *all* potential commands must be easy to access. Keys that trigger less common functions, like crouching or turning your AMS on and off, don't need to be reassigned. But basic combat functions like turning your 'Mech, changing weapon groups, zooming the target reticule, firing weapons, and so forth *must* be easy to find.

TIP

Use a mouse or joystick in addition to the keyboard, and switch to the torso mode that moves your entire torso along with your targeting reticule. This way you can naturally swivel your 'Mech's torso as you aim, without having to use separate keys or commands to access your full range of motion.

COMBAT STARTS LONG AND ENDS SHORT

Figure 6-2. Combat typically begins at long range, but quickly closes to medium or short range.

As a general rule, combat begins at long range and gradually closes to short range. This occurs naturally as you move through enemy territory. As you first move into an area, enemies are at long range. If you have a direct line of sight with the enemy, long-range weapons fire will be exchanged.

Quickly, however, the fight tends to close to medium or short range. Partially, this is because both parties will tend to stay in motion to avoid getting hit, yet will want to keep the opponent in their forward field of view as they move—so they find themselves moving ever closer as they follow their chosen angle of attack. Also, because most 'Mechs are geared toward fighting at medium range, most enemies try to enter this range so the majority of their weapons can be brought to bear.

Understanding this rule helps you to understand why it's difficult to succeed with 'Mechs geared solely toward long-range or short-range combat. BattleMechs with only long-range weapons, for example, will do well in the early stages of the fight but will suffer if their target manages to get close.

Conversely, 'Mechs with only heavy-hitting short-range weapons will suffer in the early stages of combat, when they have no response to the enemy's long-range barrages.

TIP

It's possible to use terrain features to block enemies' view of your 'Mech during the early stages of combat, then pop out of cover when the enemy is close. If you can make this work, you can succeed with a 'Mech armed with only short-range weapons.

This technique can work in multiplayer games, where you can hide behind cover all you want. But it's harder to live by this technique in the single-player campaign. That's because you can't just hide behind a rock in a campaign mission; you have to explore and achieve multiple goals. That tends to force you out into the open, where enemies with long-range weapons can pick you apart.

TIP

Running away to maintain long range in combat is a difficult proposal, as it requires your 'Mech to be faster than that of the enemy. It also gives enemy 'Mechs an opportunity to pick away at your thin rear torso armor. It's difficult enough to hit a moving target without also worrying about the distance at which you're fighting.

Finally, running away forces you to either forego the opportunity to return fire, or to run while looking back at your target, which increases the possibility that you'll get snagged on an unseen terrain feature.

This is not to say that it's physically impossible to maintain long range throughout an entire fight—but it's difficult, so you probably don't want to make it your bread-and-butter tactic.

MOVEMENT IS CRUCIAL

Figure 6-3. Moving 'Mechs are significantly harder to hit.

A golden rule in combat is to always keep moving—and quickly. Stationary targets are easy to hit, so you won't last long if you stand still or constantly move at a snail's pace.

This rule will become clear when your 'Mech enters areas with heavy concentrations of enemy forces. Standing still will usually get your 'Mech knocked down or destroyed within moments. You'll live longer if you keep moving.

You'll find more tips on movement later in this chapter.

BIGGER 'MECHS ARE BIGGER TARGETS

Figure 6-4. It's easier to aim at big 'Mechs than small 'Mechs, due to their larger size and lower top speeds.

Larger 'Mechs are undeniably more dangerous than smaller ones, both because of their massive weapon payloads and their tough armor. However, you'll find that there are certain tradeoffs when you take a big 'Mech. Larger 'Mechs tend to be slower than small 'Mechs, mainly because as a 'Mech grows in size it requires a larger (and thus, less efficient) engine to generate high speeds. It's physically possible to make a 100-ton 'Mech relatively fast, but the cost in tonnage leaves little room for weapons and equipment.

While a super-fast Owens' armor is extremely weak and vulnerable, actually hitting the Owens (which has a top speed near 130 kph) can be a tricky proposition. Hitting a heavily armored 100-ton Daishi, on the other hand (with its top speed of approximately 48 kph) is usually not difficult.

Also, big 'Mechs are simply big targets; this fact shouldn't be discounted. A 30- or 35-ton 'Mech like an Owens is physically small compared to a 100-tonner. It's sometimes hard to hit any part of an Owens, never mind targeting specific body parts. When fighting a Daishi, on the other hand, it's usually an easy matter to attack a specific arm or leg because it's physically big and thick.

Nevertheless, realize that you're vulnerable no matter what sort of 'Mech you're piloting. Investing in slightly larger engines for your large BattleMechs can sometimes pay off, and prevent you from getting shot up too thoroughly.

EQUIP FEW AND SIMPLE WEAPON GROUPS

Figure 6-5. Having only two or three weapons groups simplifies combat.

You should usually group your weapons into a few large clusters instead of several smaller ones. Combat is difficult enough as it is without fumbling through multiple groups of similar weapons; you want to make it easier by having only a few weapon groups to choose from.

Also, your weapon groups should consist of homogenous (similar) weapons. We've already covered this point in Chapter 4, but it bears repeating. A weapon group containing both lasers and Autocannons, for example, usually won't work. In this case, you have to lead the target with the Autocannons, but you don't have to lead with the lasers, so regardless of where you aim you're bound to miss with one weapon or the other (assuming that you use group fire).

We suggest that you reduce your weapon groups to three, or perhaps even two. To do this, first load your 'Mech with homogenous weapons, so that grouping isn't a problem. Then, sort the weapons by range. For example, your 'Mech might have three LRM 5s in one group and six Medium Pulse Lasers in a second. The LRMs would be used for picking off long-range targets and for harassing enemies at the start of a fight. Then, as the fight moves to closer range, it's a simple matter to switch to the Pulse Lasers.

If you want more variety than two or three weapons groups can provide, go ahead and make more. It can often be useful to have a separate group for special weapons, like an Autocannon 20 that you'll only use against the very toughest foes. However, try to keep weapons groups few and simple until you're fairly experienced.

TARGETING INDIVIDUAL AREAS IS NECESSARY

Figure 6-6. Target individual body parts on enemy 'Mechs; legs are the recommended target.

BattleMechs have several distinct body parts, and each part has its own armor. The least efficient way to kill a 'Mech is to scatter weapon fire all across its body, damaging armor first in one spot and then in another. If you do this, it'll take forever to puncture the armor deeply enough to do any real damage to the 'Mech's internal components.

The most efficient way to kill a 'Mech, conversely, is to pick a part of its body and concentrate your fire exclusively on it. This way you'll peel off the armor from this area quickly, and every subsequent shot will deal significant damage to internal components in that area.

The only drawback of targeting a particular body part is that it's more difficult to aim at part of a 'Mech than an entire 'Mech. Nonetheless, you shouldn't let this fact deter you. Practice shooting at individual body parts, and remember to use the numeric keypad to force even your missiles to concentrate on the chosen body part (see your manual for details).

Target legs almost exclusively. Arms are relatively fragile and they often contain weapons, but if they're destroyed, the rest of the 'Mech remains intact. Legs, on the other hand, are fairly easy to hit. They're not as well-armored as the torso, and still vital: if either leg is taken out, the 'Mech is instantly taken out of commission.

The only time you might want to forget this rule is when you're piloting a heavy-hitting 'Mech and your enemy is a small, fast 'Mech like a Firefly or Owens. In this case your weapons are strong enough to do significant damage regardless of where you hit the enemy, and the enemy is so small and quick that hitting the legs is very difficult. Furthermore, after the first few campaign missions, salvaging a Firefly or Owens won't be a primary concern; you'll want to concentrate on salvaging bigger 'Mechs. In this case, feel free to go for the body. If you can score a knockdown, you can usually end the fight with another fast weapons volley.

TIP

Leg targeting is also good for salvage purposes. By taking out legs, which don't contain critical components like the engine or cockpit, you increase the chances that the downed 'Mech will be salvageable. Also, because weapons are never placed on a 'Mech's legs, you're more likely to leave the 'Mech's individual weapons intact.

TIP

The middle part of a 'Mech's leg is usually the skinniest. The biggest and easiest-to-hit pieces are usually the feet and the upper thighs, near where the legs connect to the torso. Aim for either of these spots when attempting to shoot a leg off a 'Mech.

KNOCKOUT PUNCHES ARE PREFERABLE TO JABS

Figure 6-7. Group-firing your weapons, like this cluster of lasers, is usually more effective than single-firing or chain-firing them.

As explained in the last section, it's best to concentrate your fire on one piece of a 'Mech's body, so you can penetrate the armor in that area and damage internal components quickly. It's just as important to concentrate your attack's power. You want to hit hard and fast, disabling opponents before they have time to hurt you in return.

The fastest way to do this is to inflict massive damage on one spot in an instant. This involves using either massive weapons such as Autocannon 20s, or using multiple weapons simultaneously, with group fire. Often, group-fired weapons prove to be a better alternative than individual, massive weapons. They tend to be less ammo-intensive, lighter, and/or possess better range than heavy-hitters like Autocannon 20s.

We'd go so far as to say that single-fire mode and chain-fire mode are inappropriate for most battles. Picking away at your target one laser at a time won't kill it quickly; it'll have lots of time to respond to your attacks. Instead, use group-fire mode to blast the enemy with multiple weapons simultaneously! This greatly increases your chances of a knockdown or a kill, and practically guarantees that your weapons will all hit the same part of the enemy 'Mech's body.

TIP

If you do manage to knock the enemy down, continue firing at the body location you've chosen to target. A 'Mech that's lying on the ground or in the process of getting up is as vulnerable as it'll ever be, and you need to get in easy shots whenever you have the opportunity.

LANCEMATES SHOULD BE DIRECTED

Figure 6-8. Give your lancemates orders, either with the Command screen or with the "quick command" trick explained here.

This is marginally useful, especially if your lancemates are good shots, but if you never issue direct commands, you'll always take the full brunt of enemy attacks.

It's important to occasionally command your lancemates to take direct action. The most common and useful order is "Attack My Target" (F6). This allows you to give the lancemate a target other than the one you're currently attacking, which is good for avoiding redundancy. Also, just as important (if not more), your lancemate will charge ahead to attack the target and thus draw some of the weapon fire that would otherwise be directed at you.

This isn't to suggest that you should always make your lancemates charge ahead of you—but you should be aware that they'll almost never draw enemy fire if you don't give them attack commands. In a worst-case scenario, where you fail to give your lancemates orders, your 'Mech will be destroyed and the mission will end, while your lancemates' 'Mechs remain clean and spotless, never having been touched.

If left undirected, your lancemates will shadow your movements, staying slightly behind you and off to one side. They fire at your enemies, particularly the enemy that you have currently targeted.

TIP

If your lancemate's 'Mech is destroyed, you've permanently lost that 'Mech—but the mission continues. If your own 'Mech is lost, the mission is an automatic failure.

If you have a choice, therefore, you always want your lancemate's 'Mech to be destroyed instead of yours. You may later decide to replay the mission because the lancemates' lost 'Mech was vital, but at least it's up to you to make the choice. If your own 'Mech is destroyed, you don't have any option but to replay the mission.

Command your lancemates frequently, therefore, and let them draw some of the enemy's fire. This becomes more important as you face more and more difficult missions, where your 'Mech will be destroyed if you allow it to draw all the enemy's fire.

TIP

The Command screen (usually accessed with F11) is a good way to command multiple lancemates, especially when you're not taking direct fire. But when you need to order lancemates quickly, here's an alternative:

Target a lancemate with one of the "Target Ally" keys (typically, W). Then target one of your enemies. You'll notice that the name of the last ally you targeted remains above the target display in the lower-left corner of your cockpit.

Figure 6-9. Note that Dominic Paine's name remains in the lower left corner of the cockpit, even though an enemy is currently targeted. Pressing F6 or another command button will now directly command Dominic's 'Mech.

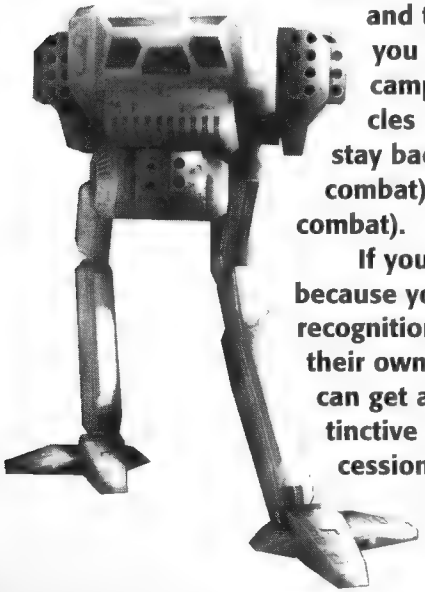
Now proceed with the mission. If a truly nasty situation like an ambush arises, and you don't have time to switch to the Command screen, simply target an enemy and press F6. This issues an "Attack Target" command to the lancemate whose name remains on your screen.

The important part of this process is to target your lancemate *before* entering a dangerous situation. That way, you only have to press a single key (F6) to issue the attack order while you're busy fighting.

YOU SHOULD KNOW YOUR ENEMY

Figure 6-10. An enemy like this, with its potent close-range Autocannons, should be fought at long range if possible.

When you're fighting opponents without any particular strengths or weaknesses, concentrate on your own tactics. But when you fight opponents with particularly distinctive configurations, such as a 'Mech with twin Autocannon 20s or a pair of LRM 20 racks, then you should definitely alter your tactics. The first step is to read Chapter 3. This chapter describes the default configuration of every 'Mech and vehicle in the game. The 'Mechs you encounter in campaign missions are likely to be based on these default configurations, and the vehicles never change—so by reading this chapter you can get a strong sense of what you'll be facing in the campaign. Then, when you encounter these 'Mechs and vehicles in combat, you'll know just from the name whether to stay back (as when fighting enemies geared toward short-range combat) or to charge in (against enemies geared for long-range combat).



If you aren't sure what variant of 'Mech you're facing, either because you've forgotten or because it's been customized beyond recognition, then all you can do is pay attention. Weapons all have their own distinctive look, so after a few shots are exchanged you can get a strong sense of what you're up against. Lasers fire distinctive rays; Pulse Lasers shoot those same rays in rapid succession; Autocannon fire is distinguished by the muzzle flash. Learn to recognize your enemy's weapons, and adjust your distance and tactics accordingly.

SITUATIONAL AWARENESS 101

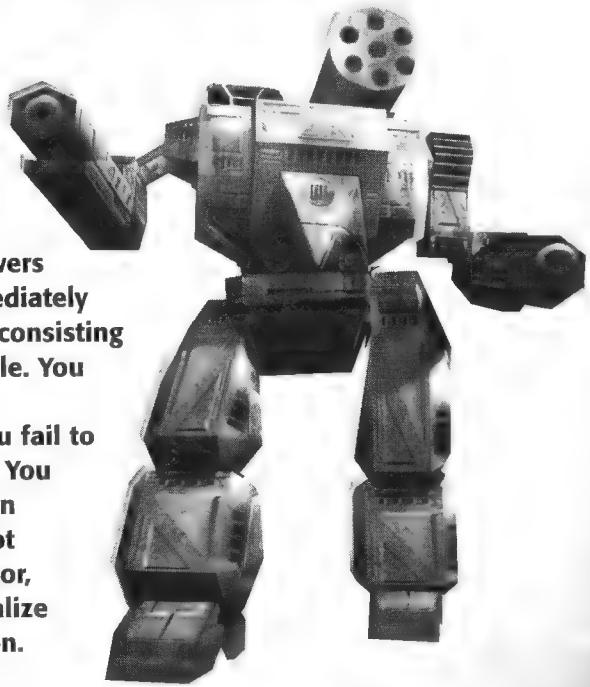
Situational awareness is key to success. It's your ability to understand what's going on around you. It's your grasp of what's happening on the entire battlefield, and your understanding of the likely outcomes associated with particular tactics.

As a beginning MechWarrior who's just learning to control your BattleMech, your situational awareness will probably be poor. You'll be so concerned with simple actions—like moving your 'Mech in the right direction, selecting the right set of weapons, or figuring out the radar—that the world around you will be a blur. Later, as you gain experience, your situational awareness will naturally improve.

WHY YOU NEED SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Imagine that you're approaching the entrance to a canyon. Because you paid attention to your mission briefing, you know that just inside the canyon's entrance is a Smoke Jaguar base fortified with several laser turrets and an unknown number of 'Mechs.

You equip your LRMs and slowly advance on the mouth of the canyon. By moving slowly, you hope to reveal the enemy turrets one at a time, and pick them off at long range where they can't return fire.



Suddenly, just as the turrets are about to come into view, a previously unseen Orion powers up nearby. It's within medium range. You immediately switch to your medium-range weapons group, consisting mainly of Pulse Lasers, and crank up the throttle. You start to circle the Orion, firing all the while.

In your haste to kill the Orion, however, you fail to pay attention to where you're actually headed. You accidentally wander into full view of the canyon mouth, where all the turrets that you just forgot about can see you. The lasers pepper your armor, and only after taking heavy damage do you realize that it's the turrets shredding you, not the Orion.

You back away from the canyon, but by this time a Vulture hiding inside the canyon has spotted you and powered up. With help from the Orion, it guns you down.

This situation illustrates both the most common reason why MechWarriors lose their situational awareness, and why it's so essential. Situational awareness is typically lost during combat, when it's easy to get too focused on a single enemy and lose sight of the rest of the battlefield. This is particularly true when combat starts unexpectedly, as when a new foe powers up or moves into the area.

The value of situational awareness is that it helps you to avoid disadvantageous situations, particularly those that pit you against multiple enemies at once.

USING YOUR RADAR

Figure 6-11. Use the radar to scan for new enemies and potential trouble spots.

TIP

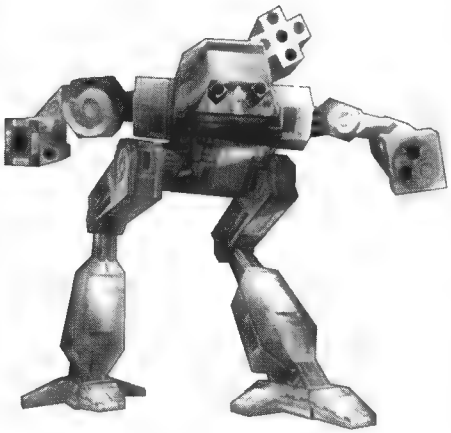
Leave your radar in Active mode in campaign missions, as this mode gives you the truest sense of what's going on. You may want to experiment with Passive mode in multiplayer games, where hiding can be a useful tactic.

The first key to situational awareness is to make good use of your radar. Press the R key to make the radar expand to fill your entire screen. At first this may confuse you a bit, as you may mistake enemies on the radar for enemies in your field of view. But the larger radar view helps you to monitor your surroundings during combat, without really looking away from your target.

Train yourself to glance at your radar constantly, making note of changing enemy locations and new radar contacts as they appear. Occasionally flip between radar mode and map mode, which gives you a truer sense of where enemies are in relation to you.

MAINTAINING VISUAL AWARENESS

Figure 6-12. You will only see certain threats, like this mine, if you keep a close watch on the terrain.



Make use of visual awareness. The radar displays most threats, but visual awareness still plays several key roles:

- Mines, which are occasionally scattered around the battlefield, don't show up on radar. You'll need to watch out for them.
- Large structures and terrain features often hide powered-down foes. Make a note of these structures visually, and prepare for trouble when approaching them.
- Visual awareness helps keep you out of danger spots. In the "canyon" example provided under Why You Need Situational Awareness, you could have avoided the mouth of the canyon by noting it visually and then reversing your direction whenever you got dangerously close to it.
- When fighting in terrain that's filled with obstacles, target enemies that have you in their direct line of sight first. These are the threats that can kill you first. However, only by scanning the area visually can you tell which enemies can see you, and which are hidden by obstacles.

STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE

As stated previously, the main point of situational awareness is to keep you out of trouble.

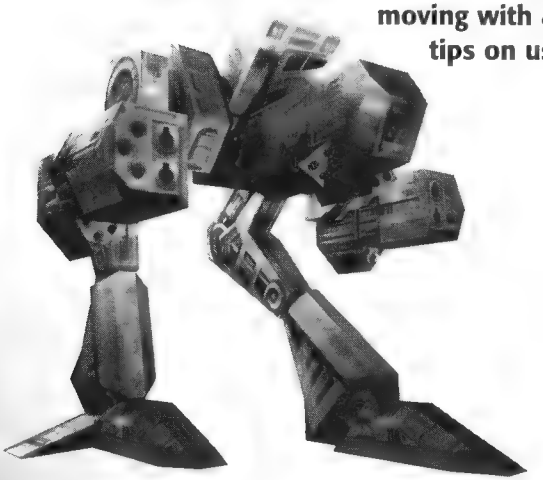
In an ideal situation you would face each enemy individually for a one-on-one confrontation, then move on to the next foe only after the current threat was neutralized. This ideal situation would allow you to focus your efforts completely on one foe at a time. Plus, because you should be able to incapacitate any single foe in a relatively short amount of time, this situation would allow you to avoid lots of return fire.

The reality is that you'll often face several foes simultaneously, but you should still make every possible effort to avoid taking on extra enemies at once. Situational awareness allows you to fight in a fairly large area *without* entering unexplored territory. New territory is dangerous because powered-down enemies may be hidden there, and entering the area may trigger them. So you should try to stick to previously covered ground when fighting, using your situational awareness to keep from wandering into particularly deadly spots.

MOVEMENT

Movement is key to survival. Standing still is a sure-fire recipe for failure, as it ensures that even enemies with poor aim will hit you with their shots.

While simply keeping in motion is preferable to standing still, moving with a sense of purpose is even better. Here are some tips on using movement to your advantage.



LATERAL MOVEMENT

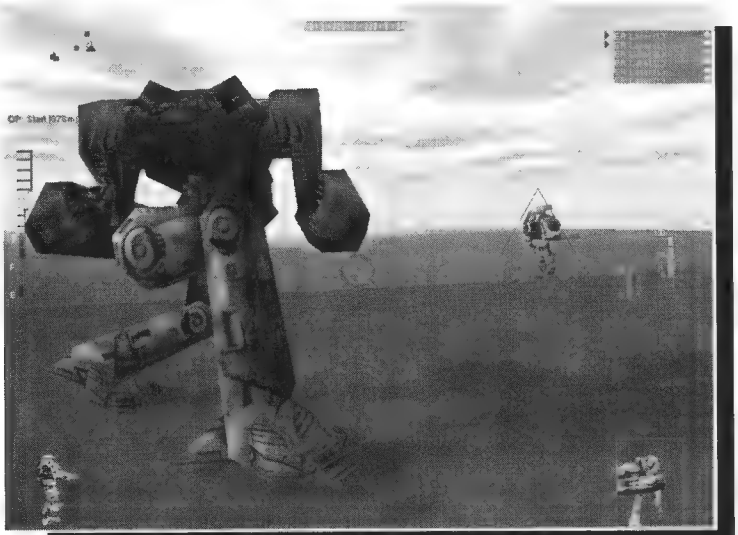


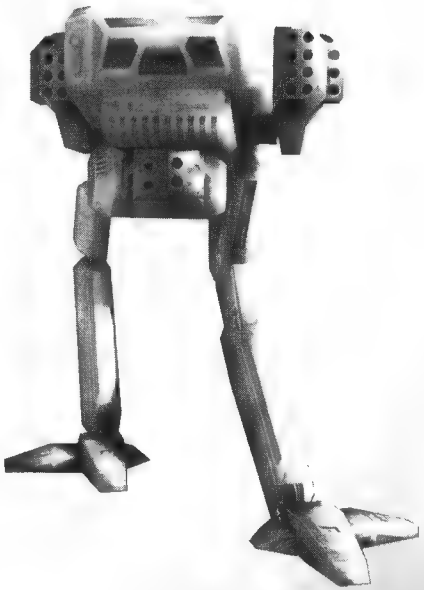
Figure 6-13. Move laterally to evade enemy fire.

Moving directly toward or away from your enemy isn't that helpful. Moving in these directions causes you to stay in the enemy's crosshairs. Moving to the left or right in relation to the enemy, on the other hand, is very useful. The enemy must then continually move his crosshairs to maintain his aim, and this continual movement can lead to missed shots. Lateral movement is key to a technique called the circle fight, which we'll explore in detail later in this chapter.

MAINTAINING RANGE

Another trick is to use movement to maintain a particular range. If you have potent long-range weapons and you want to use them, put the throttle in full reverse and walk backward while firing at the target. The enemy will still close the gap, but more slowly than if you were moving toward him.

Conversely, if you have short-range weapons, you should approach at full throttle and try to close the gap as quickly as possible.



JUMPING

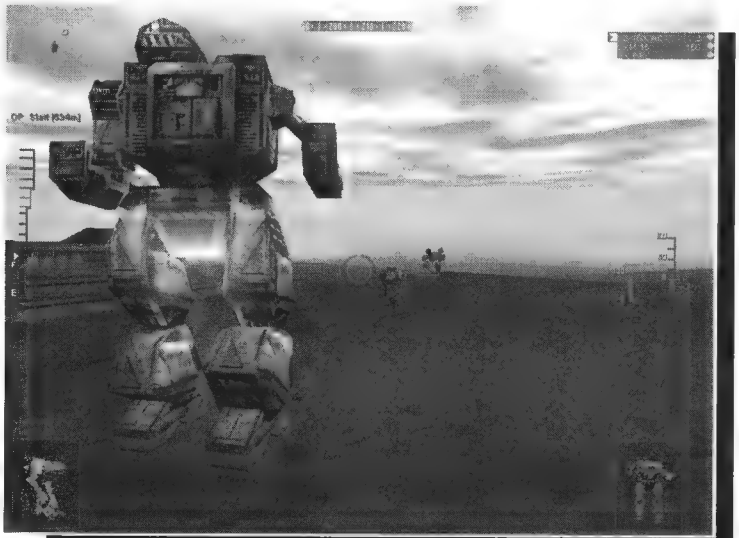


Figure 6-14. With Relaxed Jump Jets enabled, you can use your jets to side step incoming fire.

The "classic" reason to have jump jets is to surmount large terrain obstacles and travel across the landscape quickly. It's even possible to jump onto an enemy and inflict damage, though this tactic isn't recommended for serious battles. But the value of jump jets for maneuvering in combat—for dodging incoming fire—depends on the game settings.

If you have not enabled Relaxed Jump Jets from the Options menu, then your only option with jump jets is to jump up. If this is the case, you probably won't be using jets too much in combat. You can jump vertically to dodge fire, but you'll have trouble aiming while airborne. You also can jump to get behind terrain features or behind your foes.

If you have enabled Relaxed Jump Jets, you also can press additional keys to jump laterally. This is useful for dodging incoming fire, and can be extremely effective.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

You must manage a number of resources throughout the course of a mission. These include resources belonging to your 'Mech, and also resources external to it (such as MFBs and lancemates). Here's a look at the most critical resources, and tips on how to utilize them.

MANAGING WEAPONS AND HEAT

Figure 6-15. This 'Mech is in the danger zone. It's time to stop firing its weapon systems and let it cool off.

MechWarriors fight a constant battle with heat. The battle becomes most intense during the toughest combats, when you're pushing your weapon systems to the limit by firing them nonstop for a prolonged period of time.

Here are some general rules for keeping heat in check:

- **If your 'Mech is well designed, a group-fired burst from your main weapon group might spike heat into the danger zone—but the heat should be largely dissipated by the time that weapons group is ready to fire again. If it isn't, you should consider removing one or more weapons from the group and replacing them with heat sinks.**
- **If your 'Mech has a decent number of heat sinks, you should usually be able to manually override a shutdown (with the [O] key) and not suffer any adverse consequences. But this is only *if* you stop firing your weapons until temperatures return to normal.**
- **You generally *should* override a shutdown whenever possible. Shutdowns leave you extremely vulnerable, and usually result in the enemy destroying your 'Mech. After overriding the shutdown, take evasive action until temperatures cool back down to acceptable levels. Resist the temptation to fire!**
- **Coolant flushes should only be used in extreme situations. If you find yourself constantly wishing you had more of them available, your 'Mech isn't designed properly. Replace some of its high-heat weapons with heat sinks, or with low-heat weapons.**

- Moving around generates some heat, but not much. It's generally not necessary to slow down or stop moving because of heat concerns.
- Submerging your 'Mech in water helps dissipate heat, but as with coolant flushes, you'll know your 'Mech needs more heat sinks if you find yourself constantly longing for some water to stand in.

USING MFBS

Figure 6-16. MFBs are crucial to success. Use their repair abilities to the fullest.

A trio of MFBs accompanies you through the single-player campaign. They're key to your success, so if one of them ever gets destroyed, immediately start the mission over.

MFBs repair and resupply your 'Mech during missions. They also hold salvaged 'Mechs, weapons, and equipment. Losing an MFB means the loss of everything stored in it, and this loss is unacceptable.

You can order your MFBs to proceed to a given location during the mission, and to repair you or your lancemates there. MFBs are, however, vulnerable to enemy attack. Never order them to a location that you haven't thoroughly explored and cleared of enemy presence.

TIP

The safe bet with MFBs is usually to leave them behind, ordering them to your current position only after exhaustively scouring the area.

You can use the MFBs' repair abilities an unlimited number of times, though your finite supply of gear will sometimes limit how much they can help. For example, if your 'Mech is wearing Clan Ferro-fibrous armor, and it gets four tons of armor shot off in combat, the MFBs can't fully repair it if there are only three tons in storage. Similarly, if your LRM 20 is out of ammo, the MFBs can't replace it if they have none left. Thus, it's crucial to make sure you have spare armor and ammo before choosing a particular armor type or weapon for your 'Mech.

Making frequent use of MFBs can make seemingly impossible missions much easier. Don't be afraid to return to the MFBs after sustaining only minor damage. Continual trips back to the MFBs take time, and they can wear on your patience, but they're crucial when you're facing a particularly difficult mission.

DIRECTING LANCEMATES

Figure 6-17. Your lancemate is engaging the enemy, and taking some of the pressure off of your 'Mech.

As stated under "Truisms of 'Mech Combat" (earlier in this chapter), it's important to give your lancemates specific orders. If left to their own devices, they'll lend fire support, but they don't always fire at the target you want them to engage. Also, if they shoot at the same enemy 'Mech that you're shooting, they usually won't shoot the specific body part that you're targeting, so their contributions are often meaningless.

Furthermore, a good deal of a lancemate's value lies in his or her ability to draw fire away from your 'Mech. If the enemy is allowed to concentrate fully on your 'Mech, you'll have a rough time surviving campaign missions. By assigning your lancemates specific targets and letting them run off to engage the enemy,

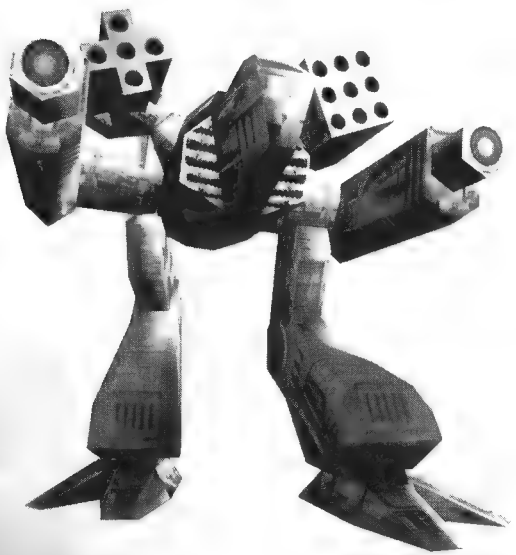
you increase the chances that they'll draw some of the fire that would otherwise all be directed at you.

Here's a review of the commands you can issue:

- *Attack Target* causes the lancemate to attack your selected target. This is the command you'll use most frequently. Assign your lancemates to powerful enemies to get the most benefit from their distraction abilities.
- *Defend Target* causes the lancemate to engage enemies that fire on the target, or that get too close to the target. This is an infrequently used command that's nonetheless very handy in missions where the goal is to defend something.
- *Follow Me* orders the lancemate to follow you. Because this is what the lancemate automatically does anyway (unless given a contradictory order), you only need to issue this command when you want the lancemate to break off its current task of attacking, defending, or getting itself repaired.
- *Refit* orders the lancemate to be repaired by MFBs. Be sure to order the MFBs into position before issuing this order; listen for their announcement that they're ready to deploy.

TACTICS

As you gain experience on the battlefield, you'll develop your own unique style of combat. No matter how experienced you become, however, you'll find that certain basic tactics are always effective. Here's a look at these tactics, complete with notes on when you should try to use them.



LONG-RANGE GUNNERY

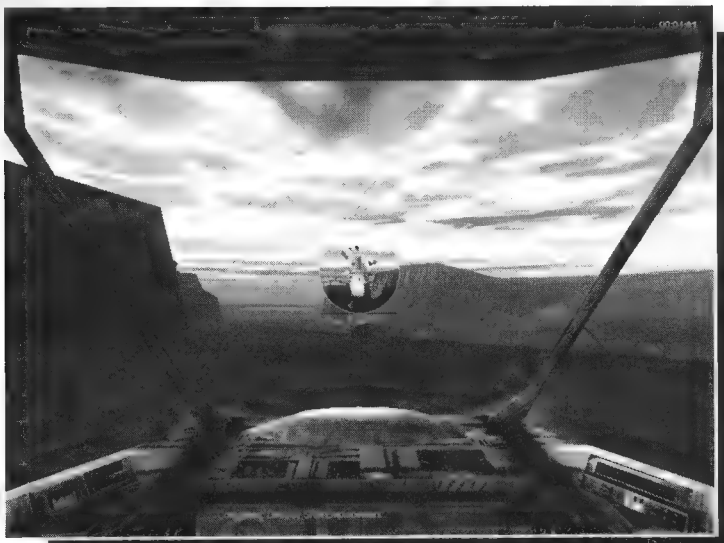
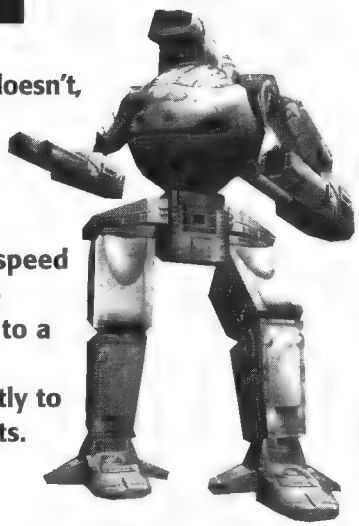


Figure 6-18. Gunning down SRM turrets from afar is always a good policy.

The most basic tactic we'll review here is to shoot at targets from afar. This tactic is applicable when you're in terrain that allows you to see long distances, and there's nowhere to hide. It works best when you're firing at immobile targets like turrets, or enemies that are reluctant to leave a certain area.



If you've got long-range weapons and the enemy doesn't, you can simply park your 'Mech at a safe distance and fire away. Even if the enemy does have long-range weapons, you'll come out ahead if you have more or better long-range weapons.

If the enemy chases you, walk backward at full speed to maximize the time spent at long range. When the enemy finally enters medium or close range, switch to a circle fight (detailed later).

You'll find yourself using this technique frequently to destroy turrets, and in the early stages of many fights.

WAIT AND BAIT

Figure 6-19. When the enemy appears from behind the rock, you're ready to let him have it.

Often you'll find yourself near a key enemy base or fortified area, with several enemies already visible and others likely to be concentrated nearby, powered-down for the moment but ready to spring to life. Walking into such a mess is about the worst thing you can do. What's your alternative?

A good tactic in this situation is to hide behind a major terrain feature such as a large building or a hillside. Make sure the feature you're using for cover is positioned directly between you and the enemy concentration. If you're lucky, some of your enemies will approach you or move around enough that you can see them around the obstacle. Pick off these enemies with concentrated fire as they approach.

Depending on your 'Mech's weapon payload you can either stand close to the object you're using for cover, or stand well back from it. If your 'Mech has potent close-range punch you should snug up to the object. This way you can blast enemies at point-blank range the instant they appear around the object. If your 'Mech is more geared toward long-range fighting, stand well back from the object so that long-range weapons can be used when an enemy strides into view.

TIP

The point of the Wait and Bait technique is to force your enemies to approach you individually. If you charge into their midst you'll be attacked by several foes at once, but if you make them come to you, while standing in a place where the bulk of them can't aim at you, you can pick them off individually when they come around the obstacle.

THE MISSILE DASH

Figure 6-20. Proceed just far enough out of cover to unleash your missiles.

The Missile Dash is a hit-and-run technique than can be used with any medium-range or long-range weapons, despite the name. This tactic answers the question: "What if I try the Wait and Bait, but the enemy refuses to chase me behind my obstacle?" This is a legitimate concern. While enemies in campaign missions will typically chase you, sometimes they'll hold their ground. This is also true in multiplayer games, where you can never predict the enemy's behavior with certainty. What should you do now?

You still don't want to go charging off into the unknown, abandoning your safe spot and entering an area with who-knows-how-many foes lurking around. Here's a solution.

Target an enemy from safety, behind your obstacle. Then dash out into the open for a moment or two, meanwhile acquiring a missile lock (assuming that you have missiles) or drawing a bead with other medium- to long-range weapons. The instant you get the enemy in your sights (or get your lock), group-fire all appropriate weapons and hit the Reverse Throttle key (Backspace) to retreat back into cover. If you're fast, you can fire your weapons or get your missiles in flight, then hide again before the enemy has much time to react. It's possible you'll be hit by weapons like ER Lasers, Gauss Rifles, or PPCs, but that's a tough long-range shot for your enemies. You can usually bet on your missiles hitting their mark, and you won't be scratched in the process.

A key to this technique is to only move as far out of cover as necessary to get a clear shot—and not an inch farther. That way you'll disappear back into cover almost immediately when you reverse the throttle, and minimize your time out in the open.

LURE AND RETREAT

Sometimes you have no choice but to enter enemy territory. Maybe there isn't any handy cover to hide behind; maybe your enemies are unseen, even though you have a strong hunch they're around; maybe the enemy is himself under cover, and won't come out, so that it's impossible to snipe from long range or wait for him to come to you. In these cases you should use the technique of Lure and Retreat.

Lure and Retreat simply involves proceeding into enemy territory until the enemy starts to come after you. At this point you should retreat somewhat and fight in territory you've already explored. This minimizes the risk that you'll uncover still more enemies as you fight.

For example, let's say your target is an enemy base filled with several tall, virtually indestructible buildings. There's no handy cover nearby. You're pretty sure that there's a horde of enemies hidden amongst those buildings, but since they're hidden, you can't pick them off from long range. In this case, you have little choice but to approach until they power up and reveal themselves.

After the first enemy appears, you have no place to hide (remember, there's no cover around here). The best thing you can do at this point is probably to retreat, then turn and fight once you've backed into familiar territory (where more enemies are unlikely to pop out at you). You could always charge in and confront your enemies on their own turf, but the threat of more of them powering up in there is very real.

TIP

When an enemy is targeted, your cockpit's Targeting window displays that enemy. By referring to this window you can tell what direction the enemy 'Mech is facing and what it's doing. Watch the window and, if at all possible, make your move when the enemy isn't pointed directly toward you. It'll be that much harder for the enemy to hit you if it's pointed in the wrong direction when you appear.

THE CIRCLE FIGHT

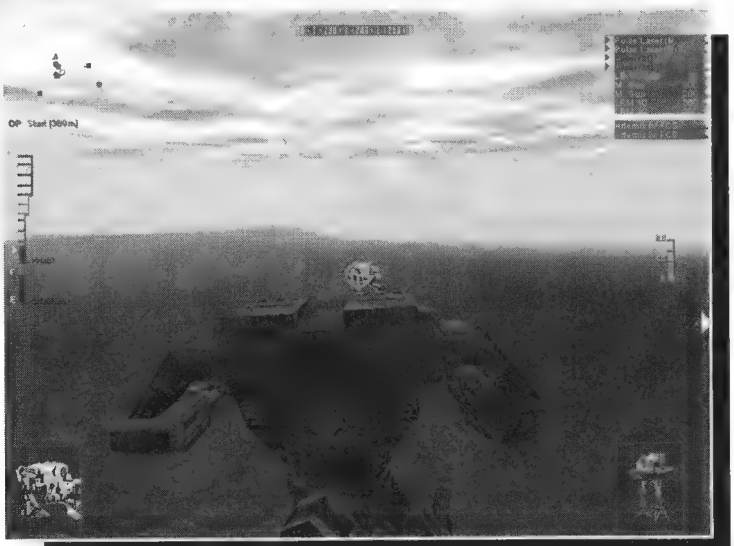


Figure 6-21. These two 'Mechs are circle fighting.

Most of the tactics we've addressed to this point involve hanging back and trying to manipulate the fight so that you don't have to deal with many enemies at once. However, you won't always have that luxury. Once you're out in the open field, with nothing to hide behind and an enemy or two at medium or close range, you'll just have to flat-out fight. A very common and useful technique for this situation is the circle fight. The circle fight works as follows:

1. Put the throttle somewhere in the mid to high range (between five and eight—but not at full throttle).
2. Aim your 'Mech at an imaginary point slightly to one side of the enemy, and start to run past him. Imagine that you're jousting: your course should take you right past the enemy.
3. As you run toward your enemy, torso twist toward him so that your 'Mech continues to face him even as he passes.
4. There will come a point where you've run all the way past your enemy and your torso can't twist any more; the enemy is no longer in your crosshairs.
5. When this happens, turn in the same direction that your torso is twisted. If you're twisted left, turn left. If you're twisted right, turn right. The enemy will come back into view.
6. Leave your torso more or less fully twisted and keep turning in the same direction, keeping the enemy in view. Just keep turning so that they enemy remains under your crosshairs. (You'll have to lay off the turning key sometimes, and you may have to adjust the throttle.)

After awhile it'll become clear that you're running circles around your enemy. And by leaving your torso twisted such that it faces the "interior" of the circle, you'll be keeping your crosshairs more or less focused on the enemy at all times.

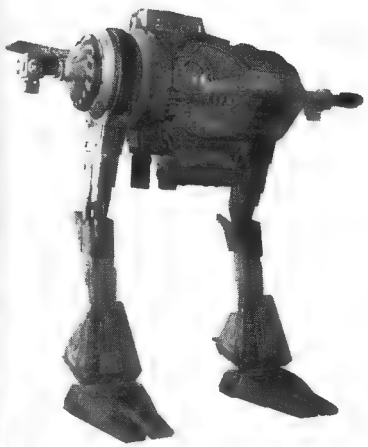


Figure 6-22. Note this 'Mech's torso, which is twisted almost all the way to the left. It's continually turning left as well, keeping the enemy in its sights and staying in motion.

The point of circle fighting is to present a laterally moving target to your opponent at all times. Your constant motion makes it hard for the enemy to target you. Initially, your motion also makes it hard for *you* to target your enemy. However, as you gain experience you'll find that aiming becomes easier, and the payoff is invaluable. Your constant motion will prevent the enemy from hitting you very consistently, which saves a lot of wear and tear on your BattleMech.

THE MODIFIED CIRCLE FIGHT

You can put your own spin on the circle fight, adding moves that suit your combat style. It can be useful to constantly adjust the throttle, for example; your oscillating speed can confuse an enemy. Also, you can adjust the distance at which you circle fight, based on the range of your weapons and those of your opponent.

Reversing the throttle can be a neat trick, as can occasionally breaking out of the circle entirely, only to start a new circle later. Jumping also can be added, if your 'Mech has jump jets.

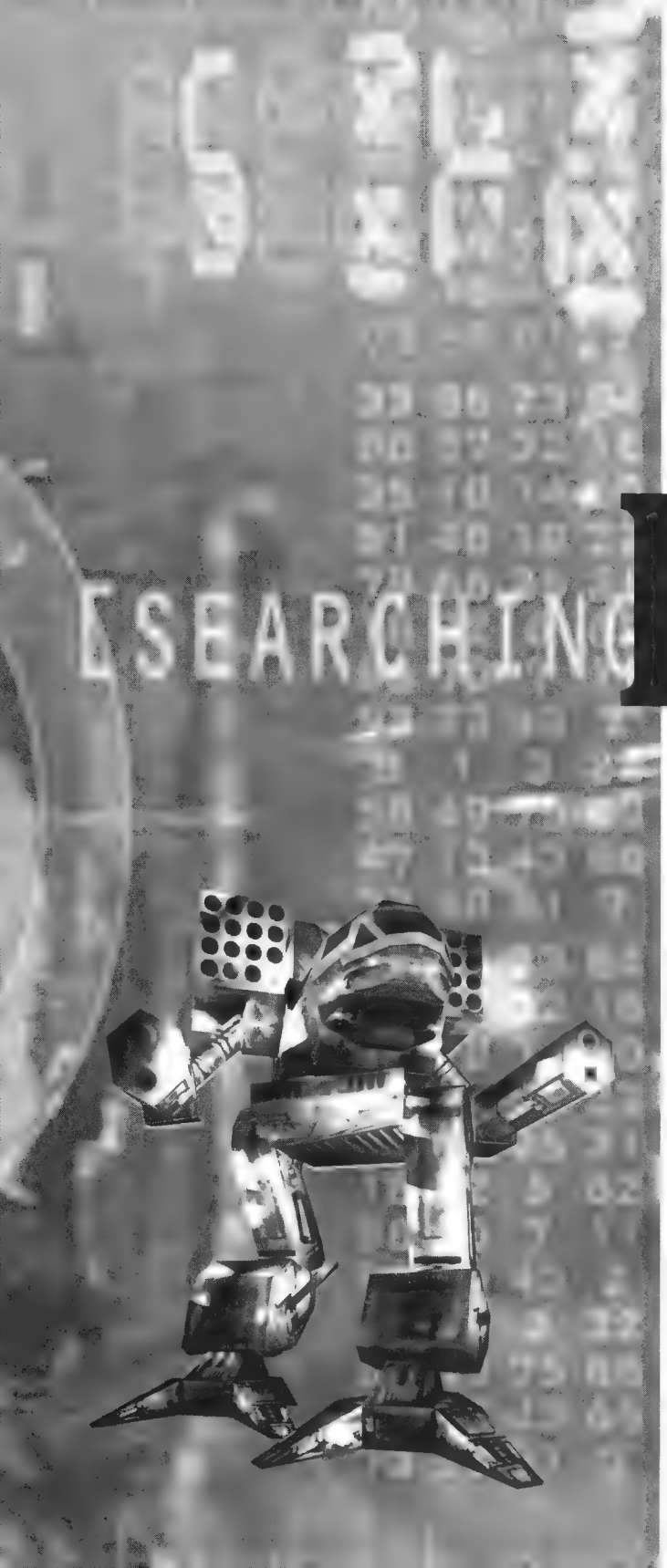
Figure 6-23. Periodic hops with the jump jets can improve your circle fighting, making it even harder for the enemy to aim at you.

Variations on the circle fight become more essential when you fight human foes; anything you can do to make yourself unpredictable and disrupt the enemy's shot is usually worth doing.

SUMMARY

We've explained the essentials of 'Mech combat, and now it's up to you to go out and practice them. The information in this chapter will help you improve, but actual piloting experience is a necessary part of improvement. Be prepared to take your lumps at first; it takes awhile to get used to all the controls, not to mention the "feel" of driving a 'Mech. As time goes on you'll improve by leaps and bounds, and soon be ready to tackle even the hardest campaign missions or multiplayer opponents.

PART II



CHAPTER 7
OPERATION 1

IN THE YEAR 3058, the warring factions of the Inner Sphere joined together in a unified force, intending to completely destroy the Clan Smoke Jaguar. By 3060, the Smoke Jaguar home world of Huntress had fallen, and the unified force turned its attention to the Clan capital world of Strana Mechy.

The Smoke Jaguars, however, weren't completely eradicated. A high-ranking officer, Brendan Corbin, escaped to the world Tranquil. There, he has been gathering the scattered remnants of the Smoke Jaguar clan and building a substantial power base.

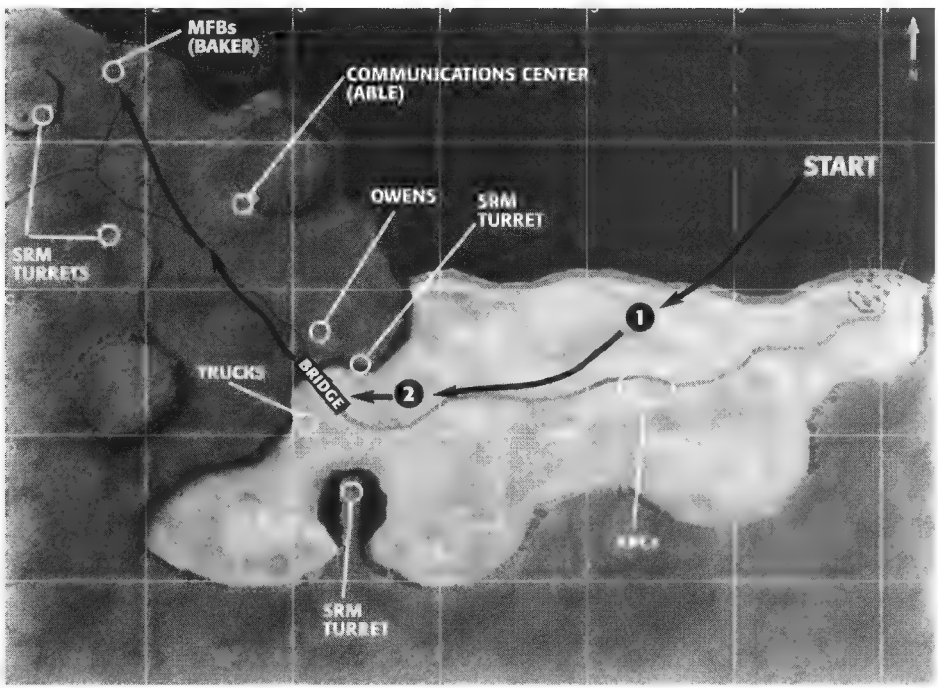
You're part of a multi-faceted commando operation—dubbed "Damocles"—tasked with disrupting Corbin's power base. Complications during the mission's early stages have scattered many of your comrades, however, and their status is now unclear. You have no choice but to proceed with your part of the strike in their absence, and hope that the operation can be salvaged.

The first phase of Damocles will target production and support facilities on Tranquil. You must proceed west and then north from your initial drop point, destroying crucial Smoke Jaguar facilities and defensive emplacements along the way. Your eventual target is a 'Mech production facility.

This operation is divided into four smaller sub-operations, or missions. We'll cover each mission in turn.

MISSION 1

BATTLE MAP



Your first mission requires you to move west across the battlefield, taking out fixed SRM emplacements and a Smoke Jaguar Communications Center along the way. The mission ends when you rendezvous with your MFBs.

You won't face particularly heavy resistance, as the enemy isn't fully aware of your presence at this point. Think of it as getting your feet wet.

Speaking of getting your feet wet, you start the mission in ankle-deep water near a small fishing village. Your tasks are as follows:

- Destroy Communications Center at Point Able (Primary)
- Destroy all fixed emplacements (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)
- Rendezvous with MFBs at Point Baker (Final)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This is a simple, linear mission that pits you against one small enemy 'Mech, a few vehicles, and several SRM turrets. You'll start out at your drop point, walk onto dry land, and proceed west toward Point Able. Along the way, you'll need to take out a pair of SRM turrets and an Owens.

During the mission, a pair of enemy trucks loaded with explosives will try to take out a bridge on a slope leading to Point Able. Even if they succeed, you can still climb up the slope and proceed with your mission.

At Point Able, you'll need to destroy the Communications Center, then proceed to Point Baker to rendezvous with the MFBs after destroying more SRM turrets.

The enemy roster is as follows:

- 2 APCs
- 4 SRM turrets
- 2 trucks (Noncombatant)
- 1 Owens

You have a Bushwhacker medium 'Mech for this mission. You can't customize it. Later missions will allow customization.

STRATEGY

You start in the water. Immediately target a pair of APCs on land nearby and head toward them. Take them out with your Large ER Laser.

When the APCs are gone, follow the path indicated on the Battle Map. When you reach the general vicinity of Point 1, you'll be able to see a pair of SRM turrets in the distance. Stop at Point 1 and destroy both turrets with your LRMs. They won't be able to fight back at this range.

Start moving toward Point 2. As you approach this spot, you'll hear radio chatter and notice a pair of explosives-laden trucks moving toward a bridge that leads up a slope (which is also indicated on your Battle Map). The trucks will park on the bridge and then detonate themselves, taking out the bridge.

As you approach Point 2, an Owens will power up on the high ground nearby. Don't try to climb the slope where the bridge once was. Instead, fight it from below, as you'll have room to maneuver down there.

When the Owens is gone, walk up the slope where the bridge was, navigating through the debris (Figure 7-1).

TIP

If you wish, you can try to destroy the trucks before they take out the bridge. However, this is completely unnecessary. You can still climb up the slope even after the bridge is gone.

TIP

Alternate firing with your Autocannon and Large ER Laser when fighting the Owens. As always, aim for a leg to increase the chances of salvage. It's tricky to hit an Owens' tiny leg, but there's not much danger that you'll lose the fight—so practice your aim.

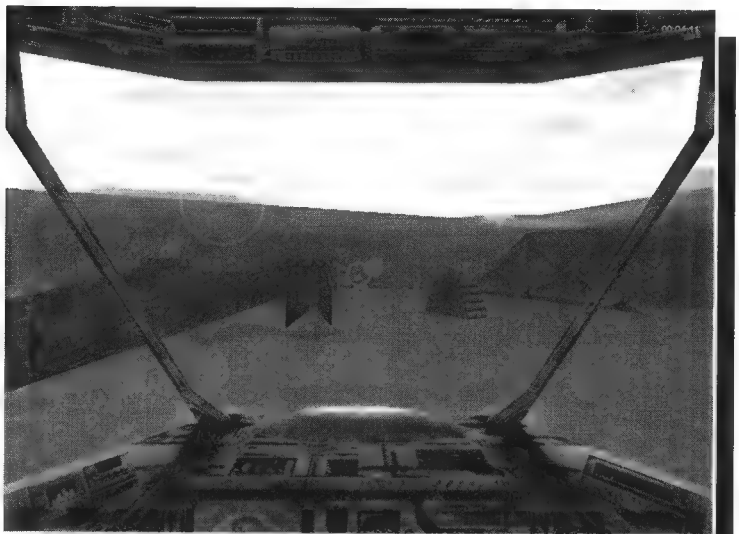


Figure 7-1. Climb up the slope where the bridge was.

When you've climbed the slope, two more SRM turrets will be in view. Destroy both with LRMs.

Approach the Communications Center at Point Able. Destroy the satellite dish atop the building with laser fire.

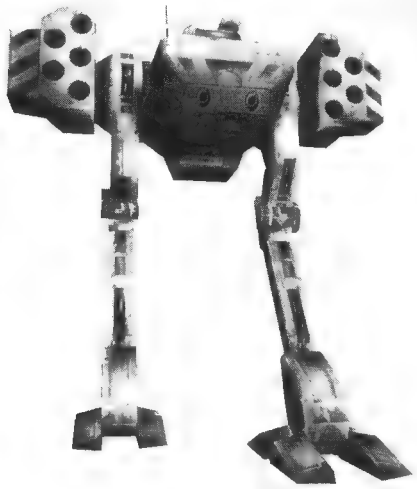
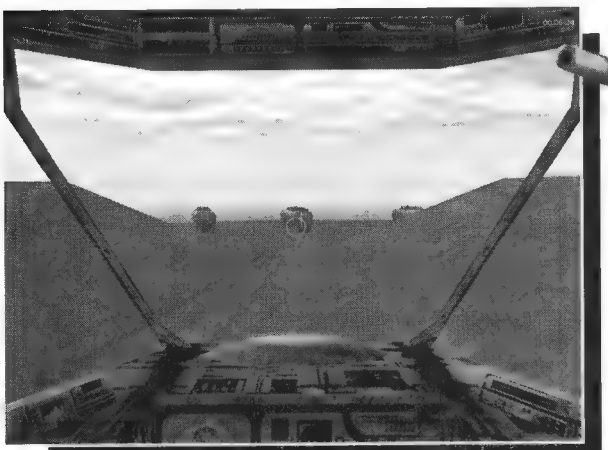


Figure 7-2. Destroy the dish atop the Communications Center.

When the Communications Center is destroyed, proceed to Point Baker, where your MFBs are waiting for you. You can now exit the mission.



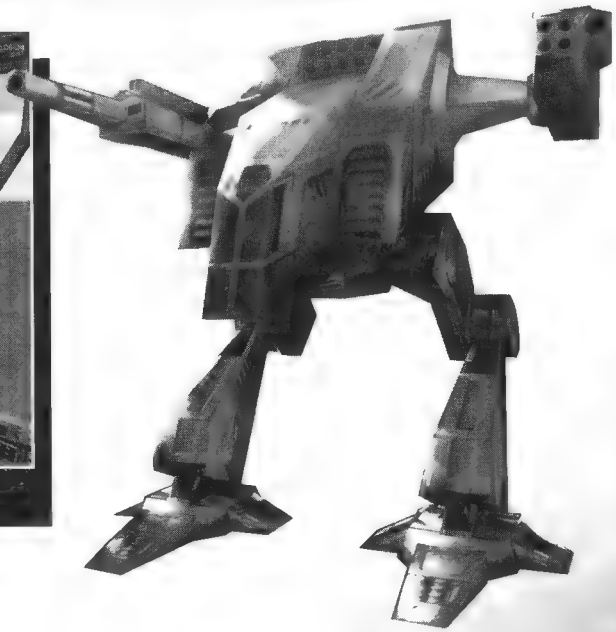
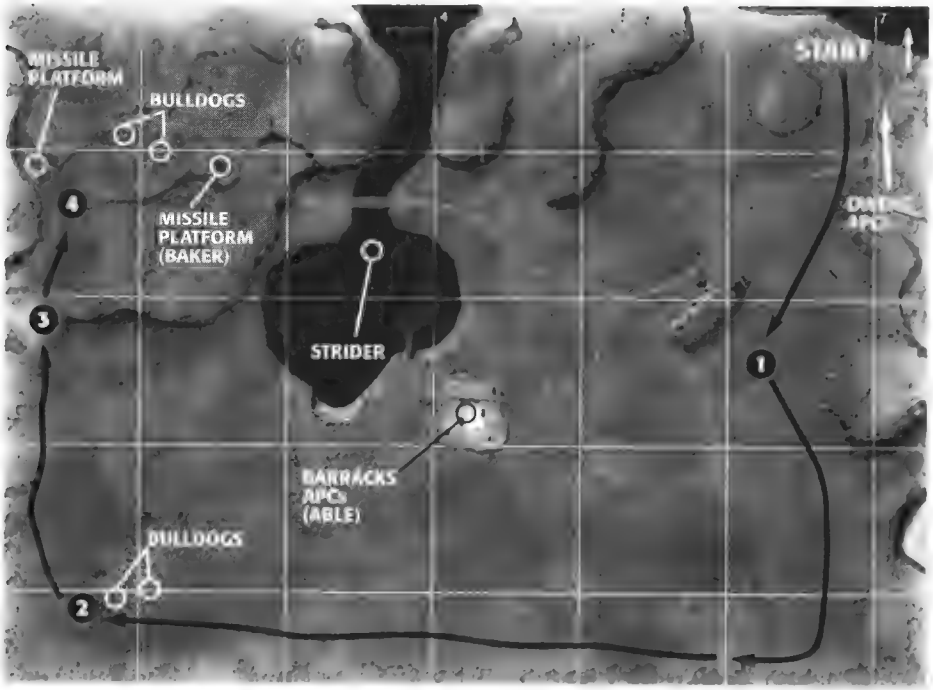


Figure 7-3. Rendezvous with your MFBs.

MISSION 2

BATTLE MAP



The trick to this mission is crossing a difficult stretch of terrain that's guarded by a pair of Smoke Jaguar missile platforms. These missile platforms can cause serious damage to your 'Mech if you approach them incorrectly.

Along the way, you're required to capture a Smoke Jaguar barracks, which will provide you with valuable salvage.

Your objectives are as follows:

- **Capture enemy barracks at Point Able (Primary)**
- **Destroy missile platforms at Point Baker (Primary)**
- **Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)**

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

The easiest way to approach this mission is to take it "backward": complete your objective at Point Baker first, then backtrack to Point Able.

You'll be taking an extremely roundabout path through the mission area, but for good reason. The missile platforms at Point Baker are deadly if you wander into the vicinity of Point Able before destroying them. The walkthrough provided here allows you to skirt around the most dangerous areas.

You'll encounter two 'Mechs and a host of vehicles in this mission, in addition to the missile platforms that you're supposed to destroy. Specifically, you'll face:

- 1 Owens
- 6 APCs
- 1 Strider
- 4 Bulldogs
- 2 missile platforms

Bear in mind that you can visit your MFBs for repairs—but in this mission, that shouldn't be necessary.

Leave the Bushwhacker's Machine Guns and Large ER Laser at home in favor of a regular Large Laser or Medium Lasers, plus more LRMs. This will help alleviate the Bushwhacker's overheating problems.

STRATEGY

You start out at the spot indicated at your Battle Map, near your MFBs. Immediately proceed south along the designated path.

Almost immediately you'll encounter a pair of APCs driving up from the south. Moments later, an Owens will move in from the same direction. Start to circle fight as soon as the APCs appear, destroying them with quick group-fired laser bursts. Then, still circle fighting, turn your attention to the Owens. As always, pick away at a leg until you've blown it off.

With these threats neutralized, keep following the path designated on the Battle Map. Soon you'll reach Point 1. There's nothing special about Point 1, except that a tall hillside with a structure built right into it shields Point 1 from Points Able and Baker (Figure 7-4). However, this is vital because the hillside shields you from possible missile platform fire from Point Baker.

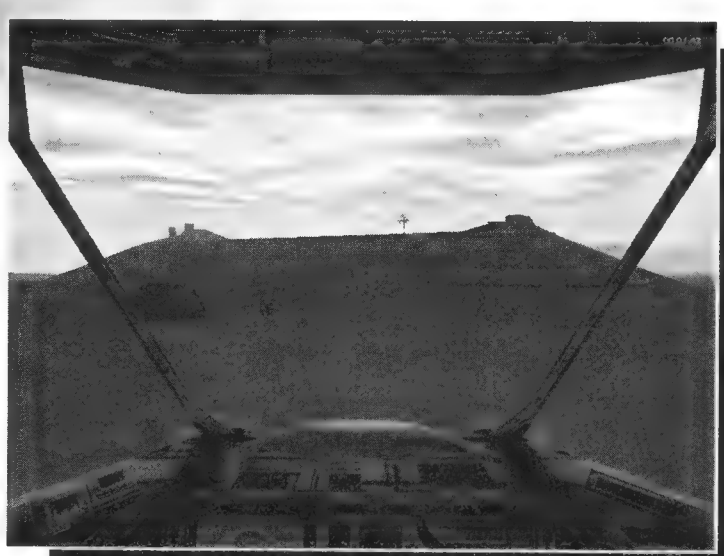


Figure 7-4. Hide behind this tall hill to avoid missile platform fire.

Remain in the vicinity of Point 1, keeping the hillside between you and Point Baker so you don't get shot with missiles. You'll notice four APCs circling around the barracks in the vicinity of Point Able. Pick them off with LRMs or your Large Laser from the safety of the hill.

TIP

At this time, a Strider may or may not appear near Point Baker and make its way toward Point Able. If it does, don't allow yourself to be drawn out into the open. Hang back and destroy it if it comes too close, otherwise ignore it for now.

If the Strider doesn't appear now, it will appear later, while you're moving west toward Point 2.

TIP

Take care not to leave the combat area, or you'll fail the mission.

When the APCs are gone, continue to follow the path on the Battle Map. It takes you south to the very edge of the combat area, then west along the bottom of the map.

As you proceed west, the missile platform at Point Baker may fire at you, Just keep moving toward Point 2, as there's nothing you can do to fight back.

Near Point 2 is a pair of Bulldogs. Destroy them, then follow the indicated path north toward Point 3.

When you approach Point 3, you'll notice another pair of Bulldogs moving around near Point Baker. Keep following the path up the slopes and destroy the Bulldogs as they appear.

TIP

The missile platform won't be able to fire at you when you reach the vicinity of Point 2, because you'll be in its blind spot. Try to reach this point as quickly as possible!

Soon you'll reach Point 4, which is a slope leading up to the top level where the missile platforms are located. There's a missile platform just northwest of Point 4. Destroy it as soon as you can get a clean shot. Remember that it can't fire back when you're standing near Point 4.

After destroying this missile platform, head east and destroy the second missile platform at Point Baker (Figure 7-5). Again, it won't be able to shoot at you while you're standing at this location, so take your time.

Figure 7-5. Destroy the second missile platform.

When both missile platforms are destroyed, go to Point Able. You can proceed in a straight line instead of retracing your earlier, roundabout path, because the threat of the missile platforms is now gone.

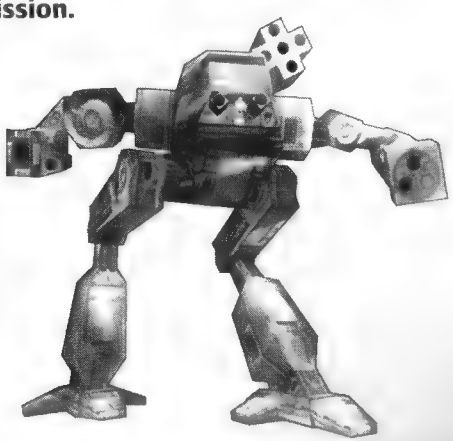
TIP

If you didn't destroy the Strider earlier, it'll be lurking around Point Able now. Destroy it.

Approach the barracks at Point Able (Figure 7-6), dispatching the Strider if you didn't do that earlier. Stand near Point Able to capture the barracks.

Figure 7-6. Stand near the barracks to assume control of them.

At this point all mission objectives should be complete. Exit the mission.



MISSION 3

BATTLE MAP

This mission is a river valley run that will put you in position to destroy 'Mech production facilities in the next mission. Your objectives are to move up the valley, destroying all resistance, and take out two Smoke Jaguar facilities flanking the river to either side.

Once a path is cleared, you should escort your MFBs up the valley, setting the stage for the next mission.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Destroy west facilities at Point Able (Primary)
- Destroy east facilities at Point Baker (Primary)
- Escort MFBs to Point Charlie (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This mission features more enemies than the last two, including a Bushwhacker—a 'Mech almost identical to yours. Whereas visiting your MFBs for repairs wasn't necessary in the last two missions, you'll find it extremely helpful in this one.

The strategy presented in the walkthrough advises you to ignore your objectives throughout the early stages of the mission, and instead focus on destroying your enemies. Then, when the combat area is safe and clear, you can go back and complete your objectives without worrying about being attacked.

Your enemies in this mission include:

- 1 Firefly
- 1 Strider
- 2 APCs
- 4 Bulldogs
- 4 SRM turrets
- 1 Bushwhacker

Pack your 'Mech with a mixed group of Medium Lasers and Medium Pulse Lasers, plus a few LRM launchers and as many heat sinks as you can carry. An AMS will also be useful if you salvaged one earlier.

STRATEGY

You start out behind a small mesa with your MFBs nearby. Stand in place for a moment, and a Firefly will power up to the northwest. Wait for it to come into view, and then level it with group-fired weapons.

Proceed up the small mesa, along the path indicated on your Battle Map. Stop near Point 1, which is the edge of the mesa. Don't fall off. From here you should be able to see four vehicles approaching from the north: two Bulldogs and two APCs. Destroy them all from up here.

Drop down to the mesa's lower level and continue to follow the path on the Battle Map, *slowly* proceeding toward Point 2. As soon as a Strider appears on your radar, reverse your direction and move back toward Point 1. *Don't go any farther east or north!*

The Strider will cross the river and attack. Circle fight it without moving into unexplored territory, staying within the small area where you've already been.

After dispatching the Strider, you might want to return to your MFBs and repair your BattleMech (Figure 7-7). Don't order them to move anywhere. Instead, locate a slope that leads back to their position and have them assemble at their initial starting spot. Repair your 'Mech, and move along.

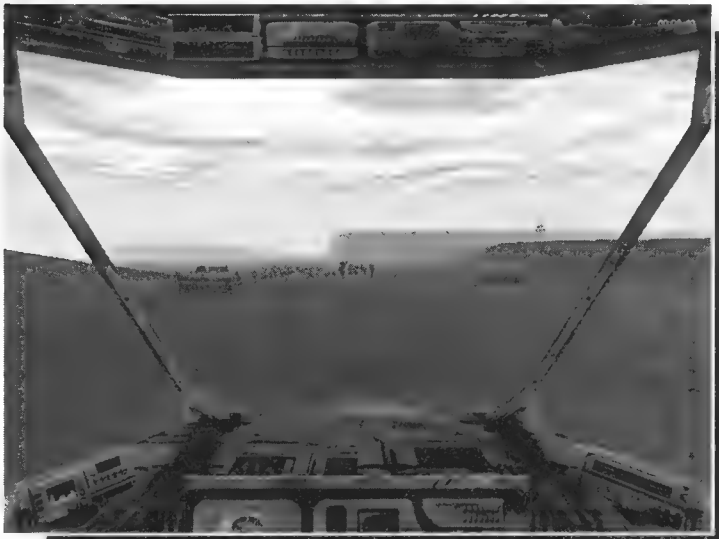


Figure 7-7. Feel free to return for repairs at any time.

Get back on the path indicated on the Battle Map. Go to Point 2 and keep following the path toward Point 3. As you hook to the east, quite close to Point Able, an SRM turret will pop up from the ground (Figure 7-8). Destroy it with group-fired weapons and keep moving. There's another SRM turret just across the river from the one you just destroyed; you'll want to take that out as well.

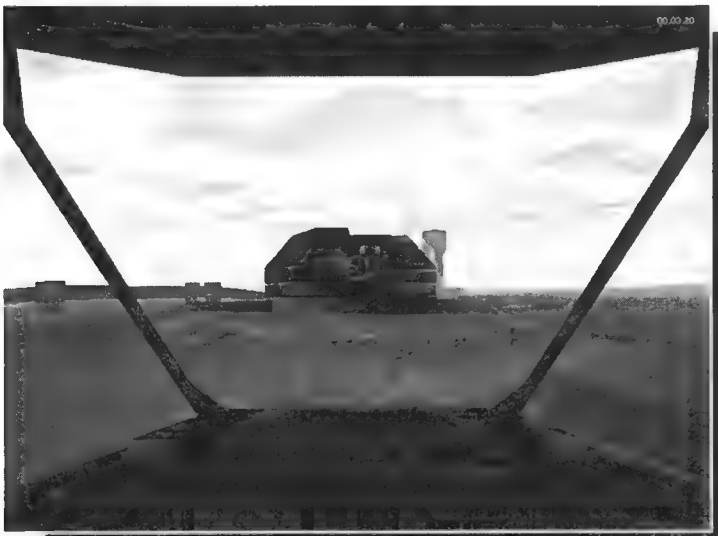


Figure 7-8. Destroy this pop-up SRM turret from a longer range than that of this screenshot.

TIP

A pair of Bulldogs may appear to the northeast if you venture too close to the river. If so, hang back and dispatch them with long-range weapons.

When you reach Point 3, you should be able to see a pair of SRM turrets far to the northwest. Take them out with LRMs, then slowly proceed east toward Point 4.

As you proceed east toward the river, a pair of Bulldogs may appear from the northeast, unless you dealt with them earlier. Stop and let the Bulldogs approach you, taking them out with your long-range weapons as they enter the appropriate range.

As you proceed still closer to the river, a Bushwhacker will appear from the east (it originates from across the river, near where the Bulldogs came from). Fight it in any way you choose. This should be the last Smoke Jaguar threat on the map, unless you missed a stray vehicle or SRM turret.

When the Bushwhacker is gone, it's time to complete your objectives. Return to Point Able and destroy the structures that you find there (Figure 7-9). Do this by targeting and destroying support pillars. There are a total of three structures to level, and you must destroy them all before Point Able is clear.

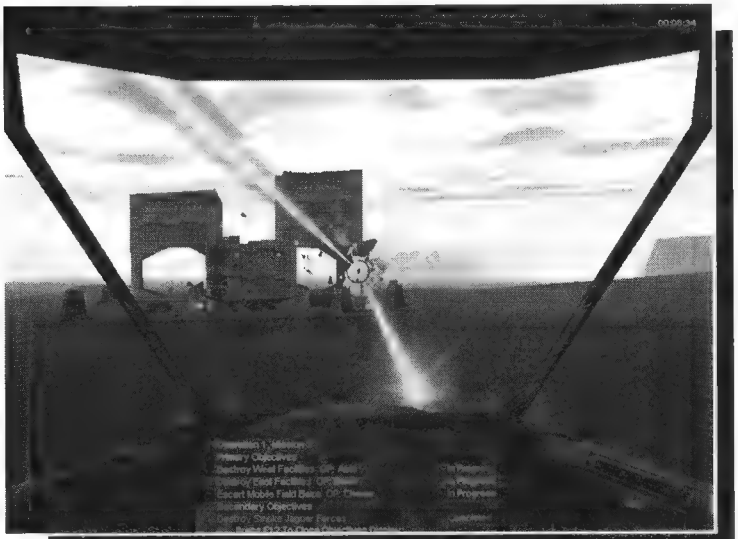
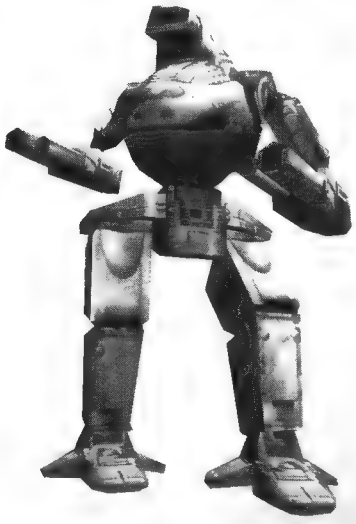


Figure 7-9. Take out the structures at Point Able

Now cross the river and do the same thing at Point Baker (Figure 7-10), destroying structures until that area is clear.



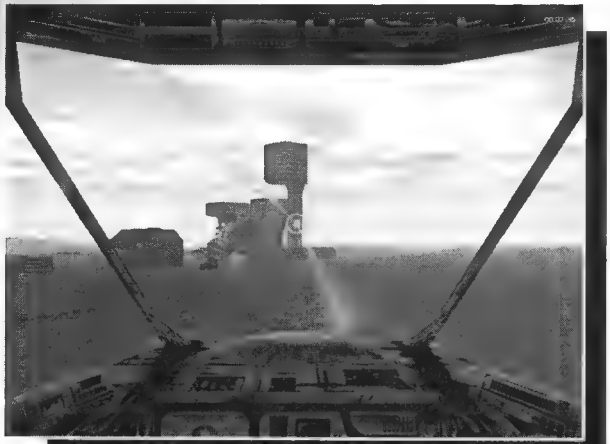
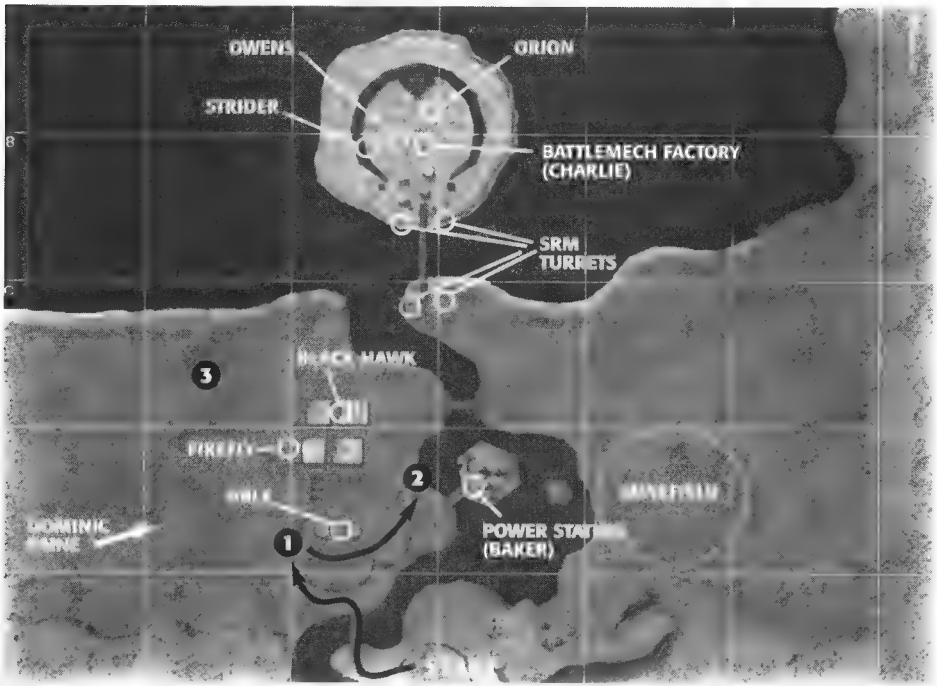


Figure 7-10. Now, destroy the structures at Point Baker.

At this point, you only have one task left: Escort the MFBs to Point Charlie. Proceed up to Point Charlie and stand by it, then order your MFBs to drive to your position. Stand here and wait as they approach; it'll take a while for them to get here. When the MFBs arrive, your mission is a success.

MISSION 4

BATTLE MAP



This is the final mission of Operation 1. In it, you'll be destroying a number of key Smoke Jaguar resources.

The destruction begins as you advance north from your starting location and take out a cluster of greenhouses and a power plant. Then, you'll proceed still farther north to a small island. This island is packed with key Clan structures, including a pair of laser towers and a BattleMech factory.
Your goals are as follows:

- Destroy enemy structures at Point Able (Primary)
- Destroy power station at Point Baker (Primary)
- Destroy laser towers at Point Charlie (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)
- Destroy fixed emplacements (Secondary)
- Destroy BattleMech factory at Point Charlie (Final)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This mission features the toughest combat you've faced to date. Earlier missions featured multiple vehicles and turrets, with a few small BattleMechs thrown in for good measure. This mission, on the other hand, features no vehicles at all. Your foes are BattleMechs and a few turrets—and one of the BattleMechs is a 75-ton Orion!

Fortunately for you, you'll have some assistance on this mission. Dominic Paine, an ally piloting a Shadow Cat, will appear midway through this mission to lend you fire support. He'll then stick with you for subsequent missions.

Try not to let yourself become overwhelmed, even though you'll find yourself fighting multiple 'Mechs simultaneously. Remember to target an individual body part of each enemy 'Mech (preferably a leg) and work away at that part exclusively until the enemy is down.

You should have several Medium Pulse Lasers by now. A battery of these lasers, plus a regular Medium Laser or two, heat sinks, and a few LRMs make an effective weapon payload for this mission.

STRATEGY

You start at the spot indicated on the Battle Map, with your MFBs parked nearby (Figure 7-11). *Immediately* start moving along the path indicated on the Battle Map, which takes you across a bridge and toward Point 1.

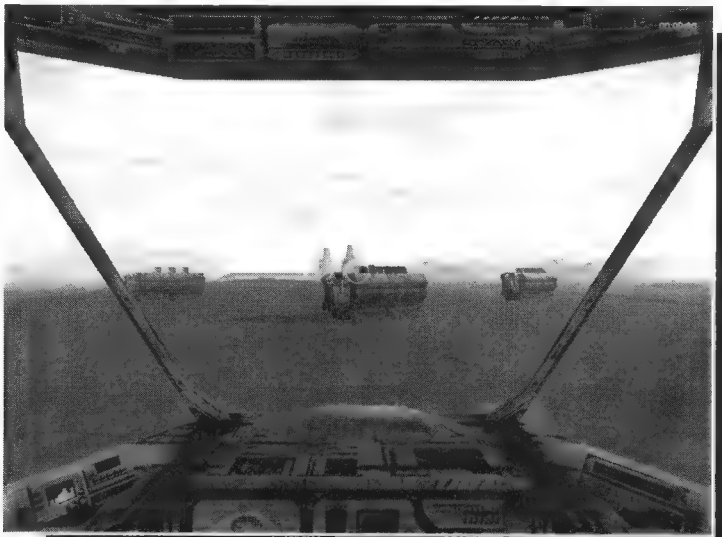


Figure 7-11. Leave your MFBs parked at their starting position throughout the entire mission.

As you move, a pair of BattleMechs—a Firefly and a Black Hawk—will power up in the cluster of buildings surrounding Point Able. You'll encounter the Firefly near Point 1. Destroy it quickly with grouped weapons fire to one part of its body, then turn your attention to the Black Hawk.

When the Black Hawk is destroyed, you might want to return to your MFBs for repairs. As usual, don't order the MFBs to move from their starting location; just have them do the repairs at the spot where they started the mission.

With these two enemy 'Mechs gone, you should now locate the greenhouses near Point Able (Figure 7-12). There are a total of five greenhouses: two flank Point Able, and a cluster of three more lies slightly northeast of Point Able. Destroy all five greenhouses (Figure 7-13) to complete a primary objective.

TIP

If you'd failed to move north immediately when the mission began, those two 'Mechs would likely have attacked your MFBs. That's why you had to run north and intercept them.

Figure 7-12. The two structures in the foreground are greenhouses.

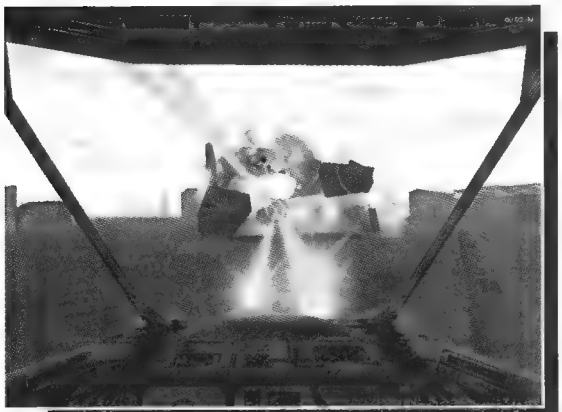


Figure 7-13. Take out all five greenhouses, preferably with laser fire.

TIP

At some point, Dominic Paine will approach from the west in his Shadow Cat and join you. The mission is easiest if you wait for him to arrive, meanwhile accomplishing your goals near Points 1 and 2, instead of charging toward the northern island without having his fire support.

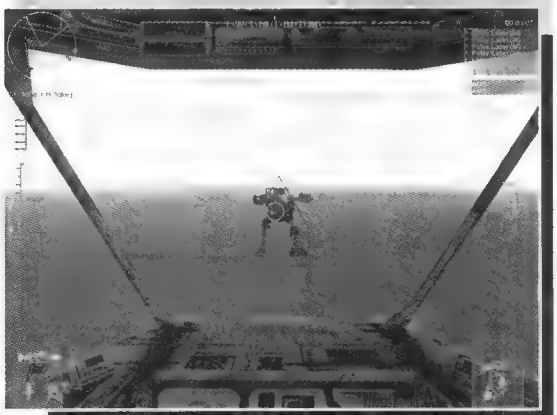
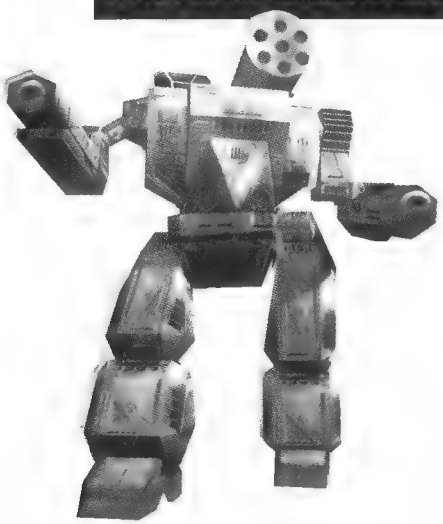


Figure 7-14. Dominic Paine will eventually arrive from the flatlands to the west.



Now move to Point 2, where you'll have a good view of the power station at Point Baker. Destroy the power station (Figure 7-15) to complete another primary objective.

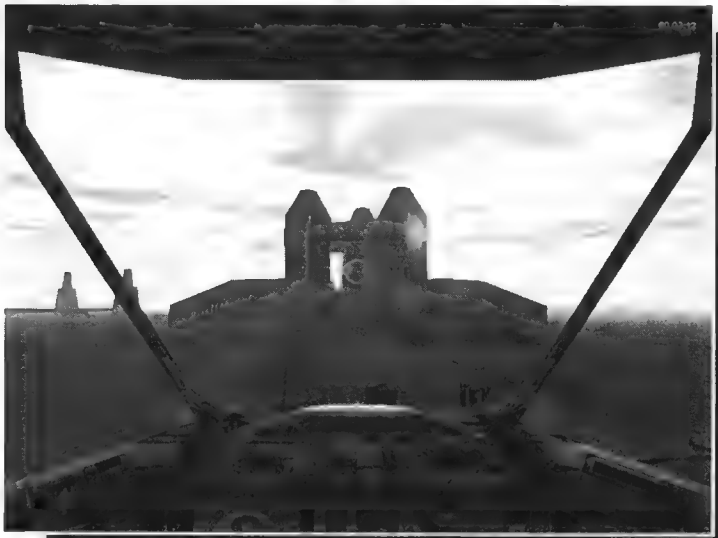


Figure 7-15. Detonate the power station at Point Baker.

With the power station gone, start chiseling away at the four SRM turrets guarding the bridge to the northern island. Do this from long range, while standing in the vicinity of Points 1 and 2. Don't go too far north yet, and don't cross the river, as there's a nasty minefield on the other side.

TIP

You can destroy the laser towers on the island (Figure 7-16) from long range. Bear in mind, however, that these laser towers are geared toward attacking craft in low orbit rather than shooting at land targets—so you don't have to worry about them attacking you. Thus, you can ignore them for now and worry about them later.

Figure 7-16. The laser towers are the tall structures on either side of the targeting reticule. You can either destroy them from a distance, or deal with them later.

When Dominic Paine has joined you and both of your 'Mechs are in good condition (remember to use those MFBs), move north toward Point 3. Take out any remaining SRM turrets with LRMs as you proceed.

As you approach Point 3, a Strider and an Owens will power up on the northern island. An Orion also might power up if you go far enough to the north. Don't charge across the water to the island; instead, back off and let the Strider and Owens come to you.

After dispatching both small 'Mechs, return to the MFBs for repairs if necessary. Then, advance on Point Charlie on the northern island. Wade through the water instead of taking the bridge; it exposes you to less fire.

A lone Orion guards the island. Order Dominic Paine to attack it, thus drawing some of its fire. While Dominic attacks the target, distracting it, you should quickly deal precision strikes to one of its legs. If you're skillful you can knock it down quickly, and almost as quickly finish it off.

When the Orion's gone, all enemy resistance should be destroyed. Destroy both laser towers south of Point Charlie if you haven't already.

Then, destroy the BattleMech factory located north of Point Charlie (Figure 7-17). You'll have to destroy both of its towers to raze it.

Figure 7-17. Take out this BattleMech factory to deal the Smoke Jaguars a harsh blow.

TIP

You might want to retreat into the cluster of buildings near Point Able, thus preventing your enemies from seeing you and shooting at you as they approach. Then, let 'em have it at close range.

TIP

If you have any coolant flushes left, now is the time to use them.

Also, you should use the trick of targeting your lancemate ahead of time, then targeting the enemy. This leaves the lancemate selected for orders, so you can order him to attack your target at any time just by pressing F6.

You've accomplished all of your goals. Exit the mission area.

CHAPTER 8
OPERATION 2

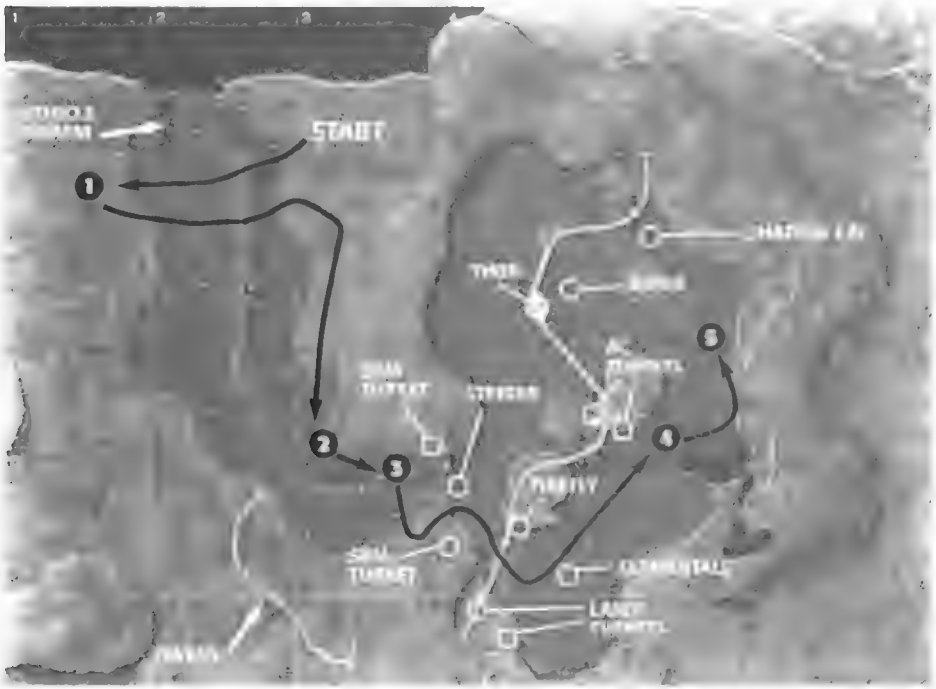
THIS OPERATION REQUIRES you to travel through two above-ground areas as well as two fortified underground complexes. Your ultimate goal is to destroy the 'Mech factory in the fourth and final mission, though you'll be taking out important support facilities along the way.

These missions will test your combat skills much more than the previous ones. The importance of staying in motion, using group-fired weapon bursts, and making effective use of your lancemate will all become clear as you fight against tougher and tougher opponents.

You'll also have to develop potent 'Mech designs if you want to succeed in these missions. We'll provide tips on building an effective 'Mech with a battery of Medium Lasers or Medium Pulse Lasers, but feel free to experiment with other weapons and designs.

MISSION 1

BATTLE MAP



Mission 1 tasks you with locating the entrance to an underground Smoke Jaguar facility. The combat area used to be a lake, but other members of Operation Damocles recently detonated a dam, thus draining the lake. You'll need to enter the heavily fortified lakebed, take down the fortifications, and escort your MFBs inside. This sets up the next mission, which takes place in a cavern beneath the lakebed.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Destroy fixed emplacements at Point Able (Primary)
- Escort MFBs to Point Baker (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar Commander (Secondary)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This mission is the first in which reveal-and-retreat tactics are absolutely essential: you'll need to approach certain areas just close enough to reveal individual enemies, then retreat into familiar territory and battle the enemies there. If you continue to wade deeper into enemy territory as you fight, you'll reveal still more enemies and you'll end up fighting multiple foes at once.

There's a different way of entering the drained lakebed than the one explained in this walkthrough. It involves moving due south from Point 3 on the Battle Map until you locate a tunnel entrance. You can then follow the tunnel entrance all the way into the lakebed. There's not much tactical advantage in entering the lakebed through this tunnel, but you're welcome to try it.

Your enemies are as follows:

- 2 Harassers
- 4 Bulldogs
- 1 Strider
- 1 Owens
- 2 SRM turrets
- 2 Laser turrets
- 2 Autocannon turrets
- 3 Elementals
- 1 Firefly
- 1 Shadow Cat
- 1 Thor

TIP

Even if you follow the directions in the walkthrough quite carefully, you might manage to trigger an enemy that you weren't supposed to. Don't sweat it if you do; just retreat into territory you've already explored and fight there, instead of compounding your error by moving deeper into the unknown.

STRATEGY

Immediately proceed west from the starting point on the Battle Map. Follow the indicated path toward the spot labeled Vehicle Swarm. Two Harassers and four Bulldogs will approach from this direction. Intercept and destroy these vehicles with concentrated laser fire, concentrating on one at a time.

When the vehicles are gone, return to the MFBs and repair if necessary. Move slightly south of the MFBs, and a Strider will appear from the mouth of the drained lake. Dispatch it with help from Dominic Paine (Figure 8-1).

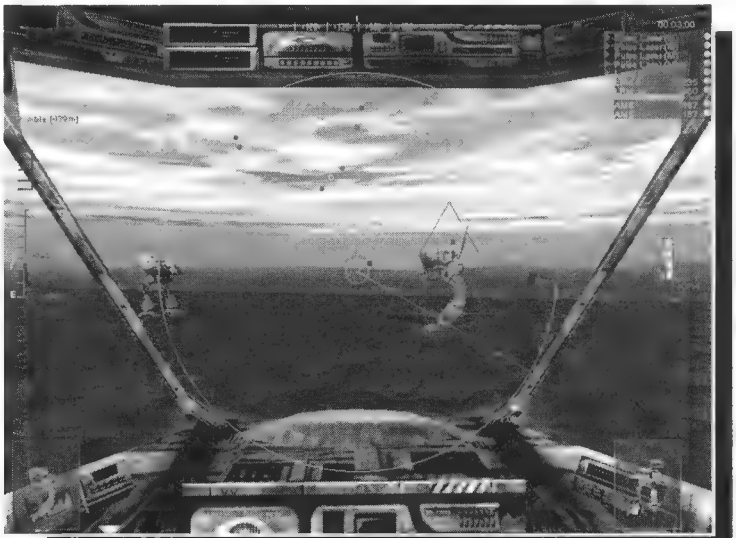


Figure 8-1. Dispatch the Strider without approaching the mouth of the lakebed.

TIP

Fight the Strider *without* traveling so far south that you're in view of the SRM turrets guarding the mouth of the drained lake. Remember, you always want to deal with as few enemies at a time as possible.

With the Strider gone, follow the path on the Battle Map south toward Point 2. When you reach the vicinity of Point 2, you'll be able to see at least one of the two SRM turrets guarding the mouth of the drained lake. Destroy it with long-range weapon fire (Figure 8-2).

Figure 8-2. Destroy the SRM turrets with long-range fire.

As you attack these SRMs, an Owens is likely to appear from the south. Fight it, but again, do your best to avoid the entrance to the lake as you fight.

TIP

After dispatching the Owens, you might want to return to the MFBs for more repairs. Be sure to have the MFBs stay at their starting position, though, instead of having them approach you. It isn't safe enough for them to move yet!

Now take out the second SRM turret guarding the mouth of the lake. Do this from the vicinity of Point 2, moving only far enough south from there to the second turret. (Going farther south exposes you to fire from Autocannon turrets inside the drained lake.)

With both SRM turrets destroyed, slowly advance toward Point 3. Stop when a trio of Elementals powers up inside the lakebed and approaches. Sit still at Point 3 and gun the Elementals down as they approach (Figure 8-3); you don't need to hit them hard, you just need to be accurate.

Figure 8-3. It's okay to sit still as you target the Elementals; it's hard to hit them while you're moving.

TIP

At this point you can summon the MFBs to the vicinity of Point 2, but you don't need to. It's just a matter of convenience.

After dispatching the Elementals, loop south somewhat (see the path drawn on the Battle Map). You'll be in view of the two Autocannon turrets deep inside the drained lake. You'll also very likely cause a Firefly inside the lake to power up.

Shoot both Autocannon turrets with long-range weapons, ignoring the Firefly for the moment. You'll take some return fire from the Autocannons, but you should be able to take out both turrets with LRMs or other long-range weapons relatively quickly.

With the Autocannons gone, concentrate on attacking the Firefly without fully entering the lakebed; there are still two laser turrets in there, and you don't want to enter their line of sight.

When the Firefly is finished, summon the MFBs to Point 2, if you haven't already, and repair your 'Mechs if necessary. Then charge into the lakebed, still following the path on the Battle Map, and destroy those two laser turrets at the southern end.

Now you've destroyed all enemies in sight. Repair your 'Mechs, if necessary, then follow the path northeast to Point 4. When you near Point 4, a Shadow Cat will appear at the northern end of the lakebed. Proceed northeast to Point 5, where you'll be able to see the Shadow Cat. Destroy it while remaining near Point 5, then return to the MFBs for repairs if necessary. *Stay away* from the spot labeled "Thor" for now (Figure 8-4).

Figure 8-4. Stay well away from this spot for now.

After repairs, proceed north to the spot labeled "Thor" on your map. As you approach, a dropship will blast into space (Figure 8-5) and a Thor will appear in the designated area. Destroy the Thor; remember to have Dominic Paine attack, and try to keep your distance because it's the variant that carries an Ultra Autocannon 20.

Soften it up with LRMs or other long-range weapons first, then close to mid range and use your lasers to finish the job—but remember not to stand still or that Autocannon will shred you!

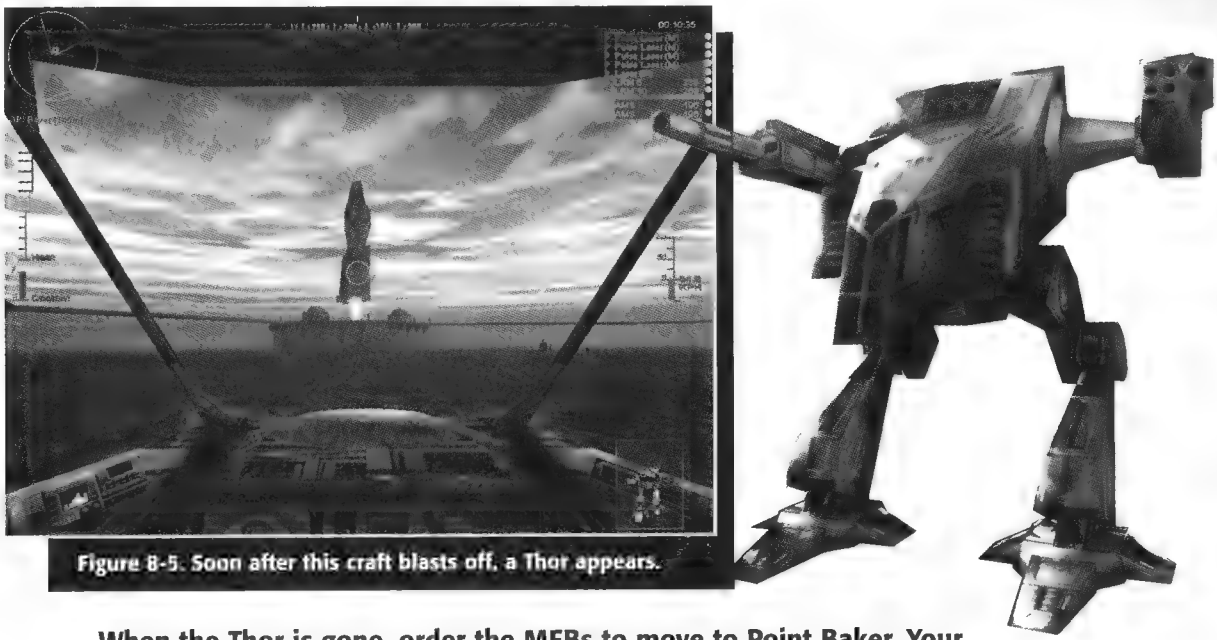
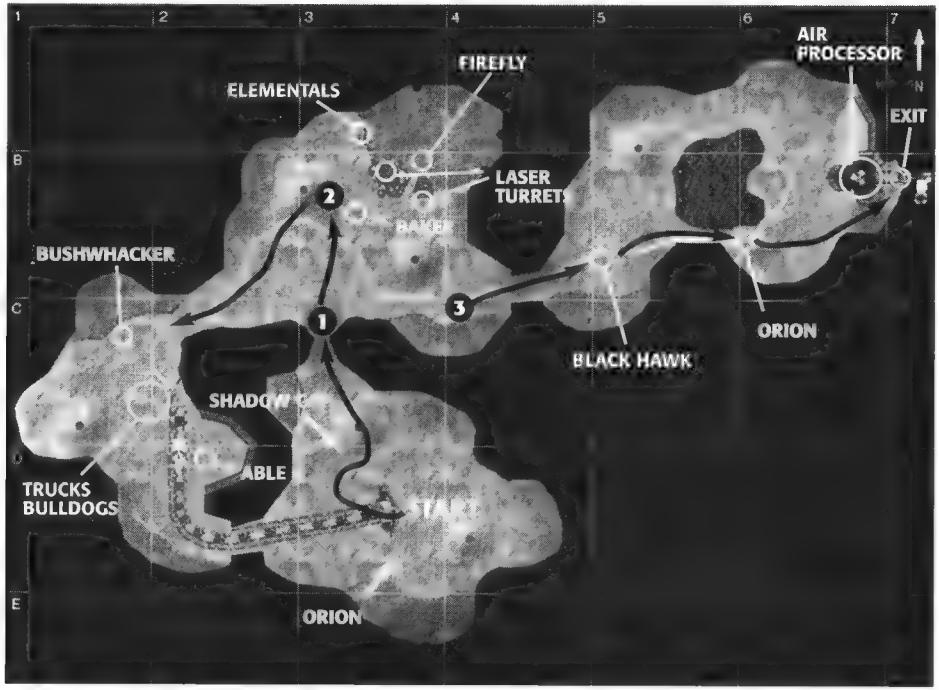


Figure 8-5. Soon after this craft blasts off, a Thor appears.

When the Thor is gone, order the MFBs to move to Point Baker. Your mission is complete.

MISSION 2

BATTLE MAP



In this mission, your task is to make your way through an underground Clan installation, destroying a docking bay and a colony structure in the process. Your mission is complicated by the underground architecture.

Also, the Smoke Jaguars can kill you in the usual way or by destroying an air processor that will release toxic gases. You'll have to be aware of this potential threat.

Your objectives are as follows:

- **Destroy docking station at Point Able (Primary)**
- **Destroy enemy headquarters at Point Baker (Primary)**
- **Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)**
- **Destroy truck convoy (Secondary)**
- **Reach elevator to surface at Point Charlie (Final)**

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This is another combat-intensive mission. Hopefully, you've managed to salvage a larger 'Mech by now, like the Thor from the last mission, and pack it full of potent weapons. As always, we recommend large batteries of Medium Lasers and Medium Pulse Lasers, but anything that works for you is good. This mission doesn't require long-range weapons.

Take on your objectives in reverse order, ignoring Point Able initially in favor of approaching Point Baker. There's no way of avoiding combat with multiple enemies simultaneously, though, so you'll need to keep your wits about you and have enough weaponry to destroy multiple targets quickly and efficiently.

Your enemies in this mission include:

- 2 Orions
- 1 Shadow Cat
- 1 Firefly
- 2 Laser Turrets
- 3 Elementals
- 2 Bulldogs
- 4 Trucks (noncombatant)
- 1 Bushwhacker
- 1 Black Hawk

STRATEGY

You start out at the spot indicated on the Battle Map. As the mission starts, an Orion is approaching from the west, and a Shadow Cat is approaching from the north. Move to intercept the Orion and destroy it as quickly as possible, then turn your attention to the Shadow Cat.

After dispatching both enemies, repair your 'Mechs at the MFBs' starting location.

Now follow the path drawn on the Battle Map up to Point 1. As you pass Point 1, several enemies will appear in the enemy headquarters building (Figure 8-6) at Point Baker. These enemies include a Firefly, two laser turrets, and a trio of Elementals. Keep running toward Point 2,

TIP

You may wish to have Dominic Paine engage the Shadow Cat while you tackle the Orion, to keep the Shadow Cat from attacking your MFBs while you're busy.

firing your weapons first at the laser turrets, then the Firefly, then at the Elementals.

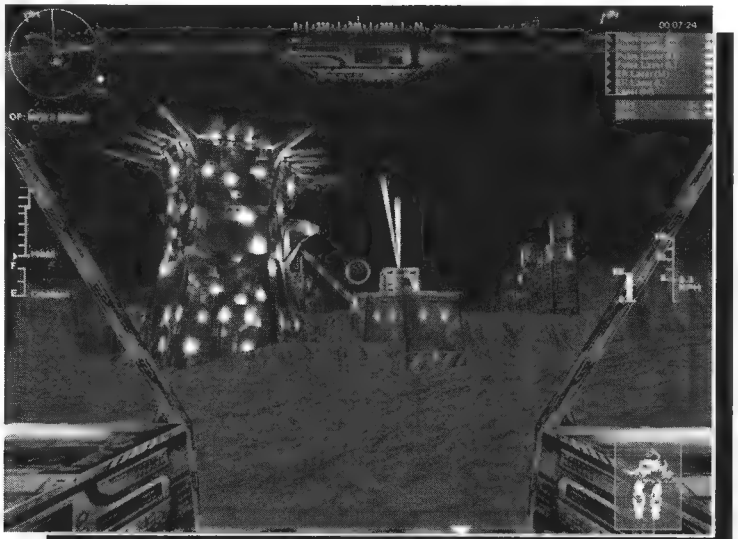


Figure 8-6. Destroy the unusual tower to take out the entire structure.

TIP

After you move through the narrow passage at Point 1, a minor cave-in is likely to block that passage. If you want to get back to the MFBs now, you'll need to take the western route.

You'll need to destroy the enemies near the colony quickly, because very soon you'll have to turn around and deal with a truck convoy moving in from the west (Figure 8-7). If you stay in the vicinity of Point 2, the convoy (consisting of four unarmed trucks and two Bulldog tanks) will practically drive into your lap, making it easy to pick it off.

TIP

Make sure the Firefly is destroyed before you turn your attention to the Elementals. If it's allowed to wander away, it might attack the air processor in an attempt to kill everyone in the cavern.

Figure 8-7. If you take out the threats at Point Baker quickly, you'll have time to intercept this truck convoy.

A Bushwhacker will follow somewhat behind the convoy, so you should keep moving even as you shoot the trucks, just to keep from being hit too much.

After destroying the trucks, Bulldogs, and Bushwhacker, the coast should be clear. Proceed west to Point Able, as shown on the Battle Map. Order the MFBs to meet you there.

At Point Able, destroy a pair of docked shuttlecraft to effectively destroy the docking station. Repair your 'Mechs at the MFBs, then proceed to Point 3.

From Point 3, go east along the designated path at full speed; you'll find that you're following a road. A Black Hawk will power up in front of you; destroy it with concentrated fire, then start moving along the path once again.

Next, an Orion will power up in front of you. Again, destroy it and keep moving.

Now you'll approach the air processor (Figure 8-8). Don't attack it! If you destroy it, poison gas will flood the cavern and kill you. Instead, locate a metal door in the cavern wall behind it. Destroy the door (Figure 8-9), and walk through it to end the mission.

Figure 8-8. Don't allow this air processor to be destroyed.

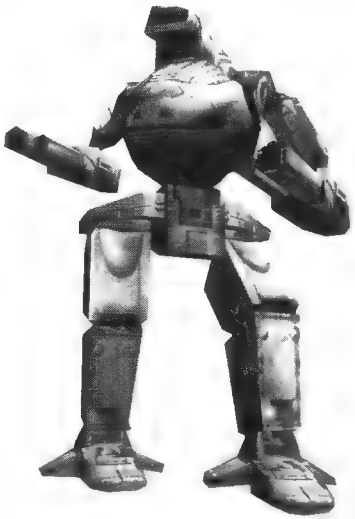
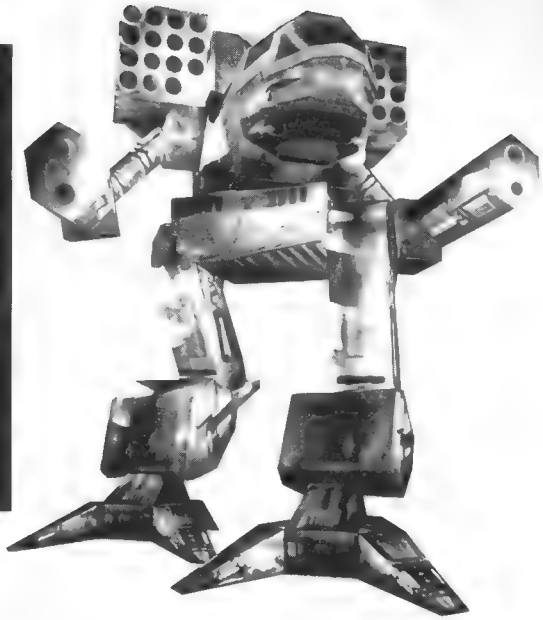
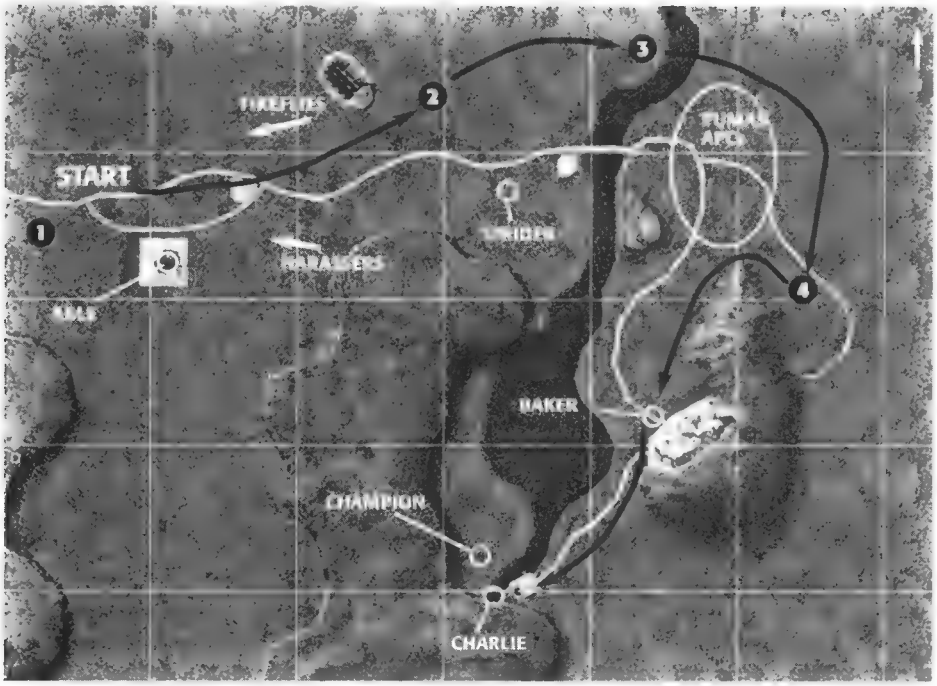


Figure 8-9. Blow up the door in the cavern wall. Now you can go through it.



MISSION 3

BATTLE MAP



In theory, Mission 3 is a breeze. You're supposed to destroy a cargo lift and some office buildings, then saunter into a tunnel to end the mission. In practice, it's the toughest mission yet. You'll face overwhelming numbers of enemies simultaneously, and there's not much you can do about it except keep your cool and destroy them methodically.

This mission tests your 'Mech and your aim; read the walkthrough carefully for help on getting past it.

- Destroy cargo lift at Point Able (Primary)
- Destroy buildings at Point Baker (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)
- Enter tunnel at Point Charlie (Final)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

You just *know* this will be a hard mission when your briefing officer tells you it's supposed to be easy. Things never go as planned, and this mission is a prime example.

Theoretically, you could approach this mission with 'Mechs geared for extremely long-range combat, sporting Large ER Lasers and Gauss Rifles. If you pursue this policy, you'll need to be very patient, staying on the opposite side of the river from your enemies, taking shots whenever possible, and dutifully returning to the MFBs for repairs whenever you get shot up.

However, because you're dealing with multiple Pumas (which have excellent long-range attacks) take a short-range approach. For this tactic to work, you'll need a fairly heavy *and* fast 'Mech, like a Thor, which is packed to the gills with Medium Pulse Lasers. If you don't have 10 of these lasers, add regular Medium Lasers to fill out the payload until you've got a total of 10 weapons. Don't skimp on the double heat sinks!

You also might want to pack a few Streak SRMs on your or Dominic Paine's 'Mech—the better to gun down Donar helicopters.

The enemy roster is as follows:

- 2 Fireflies
- 3 Harassers
- 3 Donar
- 1 Strider
- 6 APCs
- 4 Pumas
- 1 Champion

STRATEGY

You start out at the spot indicated on the Battle Map. Two Fireflies and three Harassers will attack your position almost immediately. Charge out and intercept them, ordering Dominic Paine to engage enemies you aren't currently dealing with. You'll need to work quickly, or these enemies will damage your MFBs.

When this wave of enemies is gone, destroy the cargo lift (Figure 8-10) at Point Able.

Figure 8-10. Destroy this cargo lift.

Next, proceed east for a short distance until a Strider appears. Approach the Strider and destroy it, but keep your distance from the river. Return to the MFBs for repairs after you've destroyed the Strider.

With both 'Mechs fully repaired, proceed to Point 2 and halt. You'll see a veritable swarm of APCs and Pumas milling around on the other side of the river. You also might see a trio of Donar helicopters. If the helicopters happen to fly by as you stand here, destroy them. If not, get moving at full speed toward Point 3.

Keep moving through Point 3; don't stop. Cross the river and keep moving toward Point 4. You don't want to let anything halt your progress. You might want to slow down and destroy a Puma or APC that gets very close as you follow your path, but don't stop completely; it's best to keep moving.

TIP

You'll be harassed by weapon fire as you proceed toward Point 4. Return fire but don't be drawn off course, especially by the helicopters, which are very hard to hit.

When you reach Point 4, you'll find that you have cover on the east—a massive slope. This slope will shield you from most of your enemies (Figure 8-11). Stay behind the slope and gun down any enemies that follow you back there. If multiple enemies appear simultaneously, take out Pumas first, then APCs, and helicopters last.

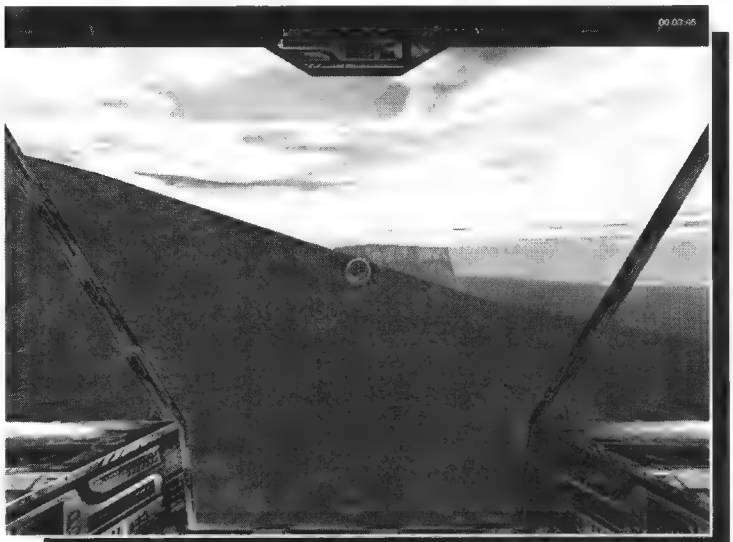


Figure 8-11. Once you're behind this massive slope, you'll be shielded from at least *some* of your attackers.

You should be able to destroy all the Pumas and most of the APCs by running in and out of the cover of the slope near Point 4, luring enemies to follow you behind the slope for a close-range fight or sniping at them when you pop out from behind the slope.

TIP

This is a tough fight, even after you've reached the partial cover of the slope. You'll need good aim and a little luck; be sure to go after those Pumas first, and never stop moving!

When all the Pumas, all three helicopters, and most of the APCs are gone, it's likely that a Champion will power up from the south. Disregard it for now. Instead, run full speed back to your MFBs (which you can order to advance to Point 2) and repair your 'Mechs.

After repairs, run back to Point 4, then follow the path on the Battle Map toward Point Baker until the Champion appears on radar. At this point you can either advance on the Champion directly, ordering Dominic Paine to attack and following close behind, or follow the advice in the tip.

When the Champion is gone, destroy the tall building at Point Baker (Figure 8-12).

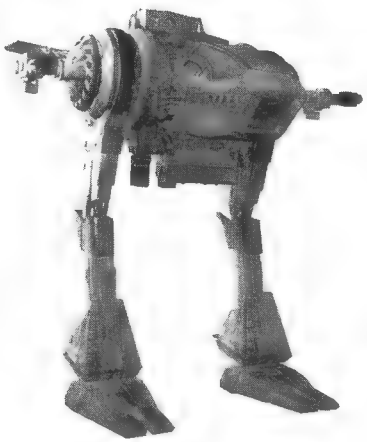
Figure 8-12. Destroy this building to achieve a primary objective.

TIP

You may wish to retreat back to Point 4 when the Champion appears, luring it into following you behind the slope and shooting at it from close range. This is a good idea because your weapons are geared to medium-short range, and the pilot of the Champion is a good shot.

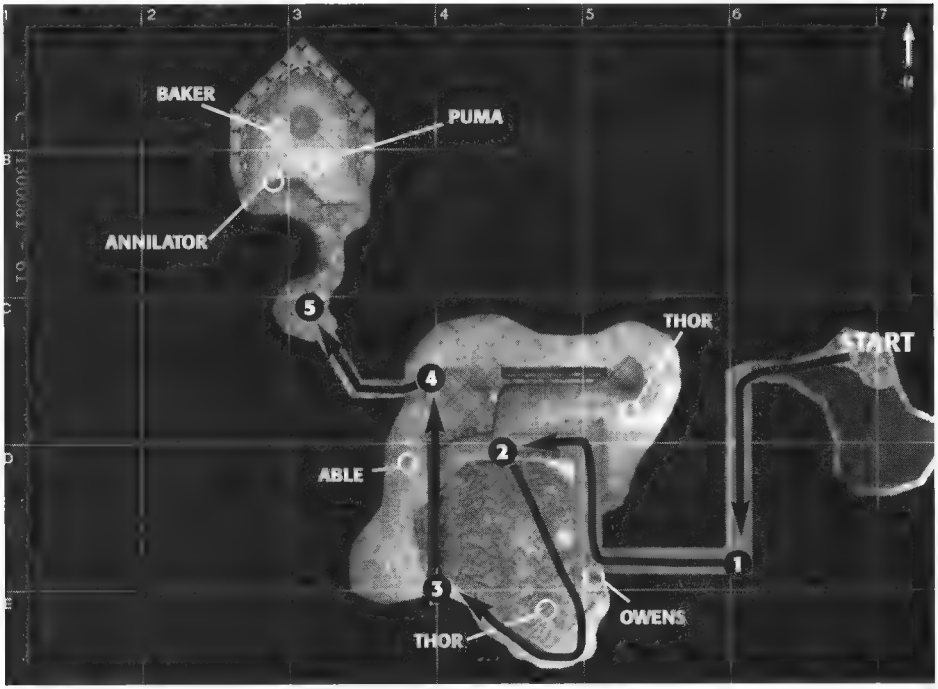
Now your first three objectives should be complete. Follow the path indicated on the Battle Map south to Point Charlie. You'll see that the river disappears into a tunnel here (Figure 8-13). Get in the river and walk into the tunnel to end the mission.

Figure 8-13. Follow the tunnel that the river flows into.



MISSION 4

BATTLE MAP



You've finally arrived at the underground complex housing the *real* BattleMech factory, after failing to locate it in earlier missions. Despite resistance from a number of heavy 'Mechs, this mission is conceptually quite simple. You'll need good combat skills and a little luck to survive it, though.

Additionally, you'll join forces with Epona Rhi, another lancemate, in this mission.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Destroy mining equipment at Point Able
- Destroy BattleMech factory at Point Baker
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This mission, more than any other to date, features combat with a few enemies piloting heavy 'Mechs instead of multiple enemies piloting light 'Mechs and vehicles. You'll face, among other things, two Thors and an Annihilator in this mission—and that's no easy task.

Of course, by now you probably have a pair of Thors yourself, and with your trusty battery of at least 10 Medium Lasers or Medium Pulse Lasers (or both), plenty of heat sinks, and all the armor your 'Mech can handle, you're well prepared for a short-range conflict. A heavy Autocannon would be another good choice for this mission; essentially, anything that's powerful at close range will help. There's no need for long-range weapons on this mission.

Your enemies include:

- 1 Owens
- 2 Thors
- 1 Puma
- 1 Annihilator

STRATEGY

You start out in a small cavern. Proceed along the path marked on your Battle Map until you reach the spot marked Point 1. From here you'll see an Owens at the end of the tunnel. Blast a leg off to destroy it.

Keep following the path; it leads into a massive central cavern filled with mining equipment. As you enter the cavern, a pair of Thors will power up on the floor beneath you. They start out on different sections of the floor, so the key is to pick one, drop to the floor near it, and destroy it before the other one gets around all the obstacles on the floor and sees you.

TIP

Be sure to maintain at least a short distance from your enemy, and stay in constant motion as you fight; standing still will get you killed against such large 'Mechs.

Also, remember to order Dominic Paine to attack your target. The distraction he provides is invaluable.

When the Thors are gone, you'll probably want to march back to the MFBs for repairs (Figure 8-14).

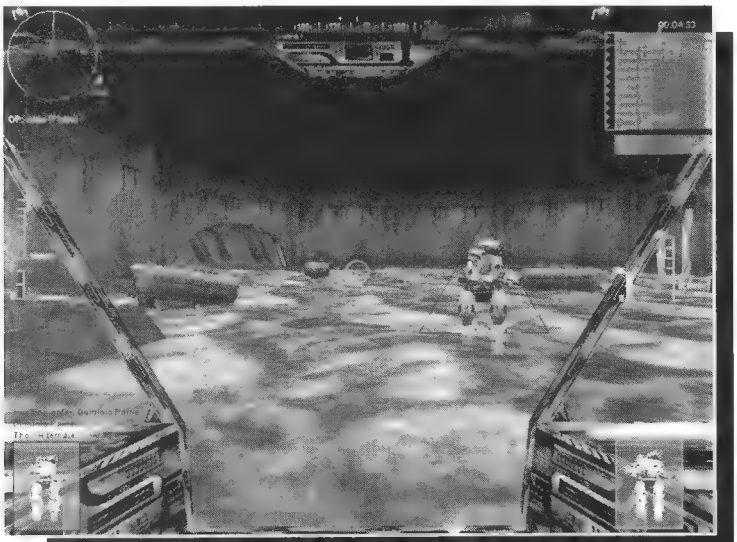
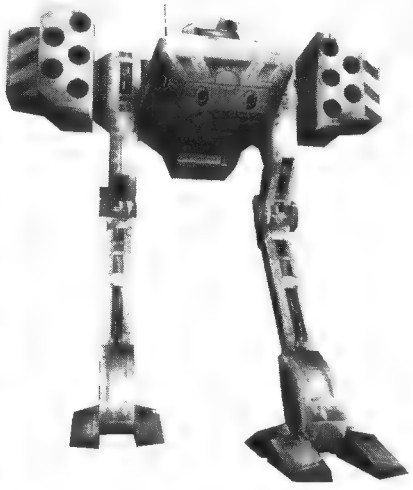
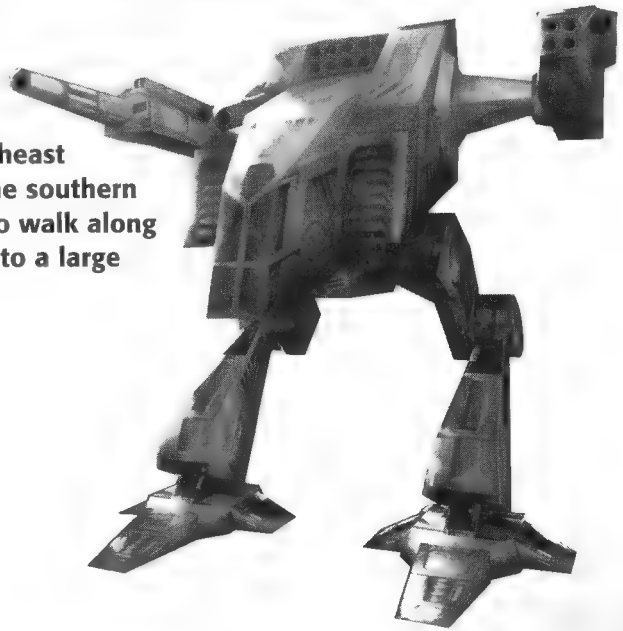


Figure 8-14. Head back for repairs after battling the Thors.



Return to the large cavern when your 'Mechs are repaired. There's some mining equipment to destroy near Point Able. Dominic will destroy it for you as soon as he enters the cavern, however, so you don't need to worry about it.

Follow the path on your Battle Map. It leads you down to the floor of the central cavern, then up a slope in the southeast corner, then along a ledge on the southern wall. At Point 3, you'll be able to walk along a narrow bridge (Figure 8-15) into a large structure.



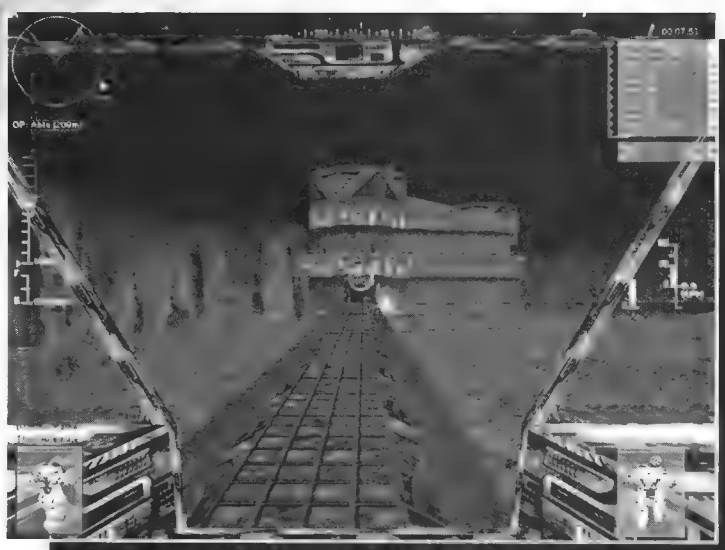


Figure 8-15. Walk along this bridge; you'll need to take it slowly.

Inside the structure, near Point 4, is a door (Figure 8-16). Blast through the door and follow the tunnel beyond it to Point 5. (If the door doesn't seem to exist, Dominic probably shot it while you weren't paying attention.)

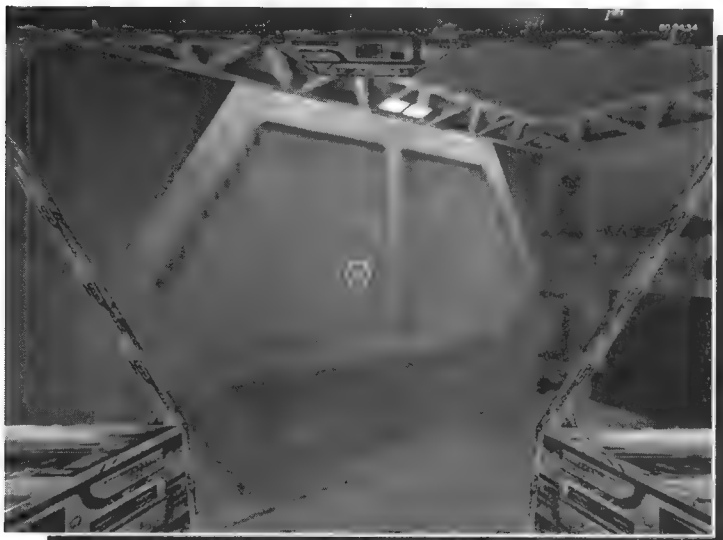
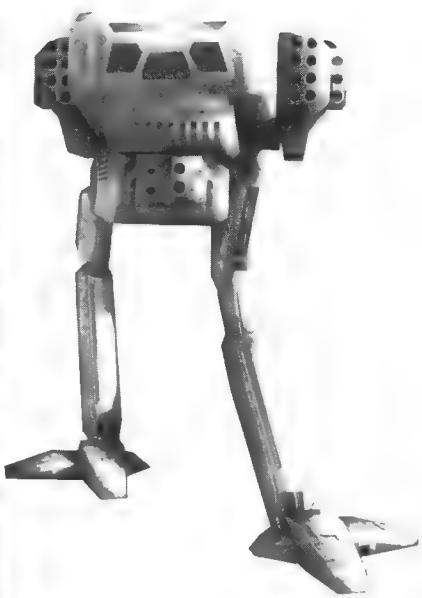


Figure 8-16. Blast open the door and follow the tunnel beyond it.



At Point 5, you'll find yourself in a cul-de-sac at the southern end of a cavern. Immediately charge into the main area of the cavern, where you'll find a Puma, an Annihilator, and a friendly Bushwhacker piloted by Epona Rhi.

Have Dominic Paine attack the Annihilator; you should attack it, too. Don't stand still—keep moving, aim for a leg, and give it all you've got. Only when the Annihilator is down should you turn your attention to the Puma, which is much less of a threat.

With the enemy 'Mechs gone, target the BattleMech factory at Point Baker with your weapons (Figure 8-17). When it's destroyed, the mission is a success.

TIP

The Annihilator is so heavily armed that it could kill you with a single lucky barrage. Try again if this happens, next time making sure to have Dominic Paine lead the attack and trying to stay in motion at all times.

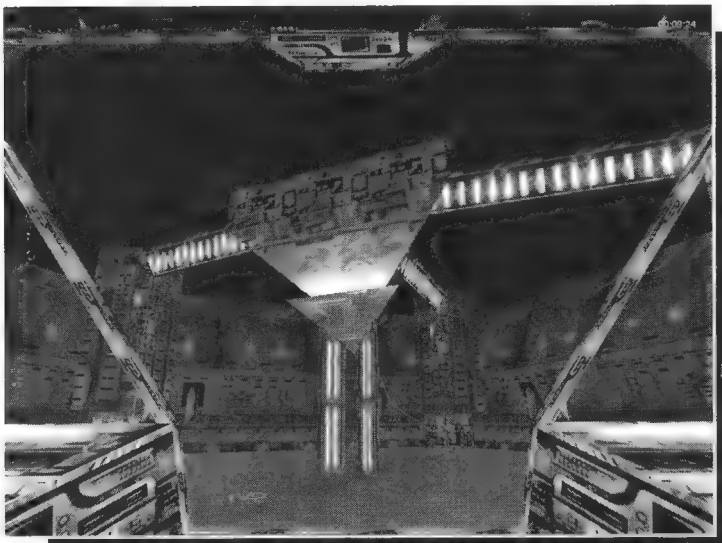
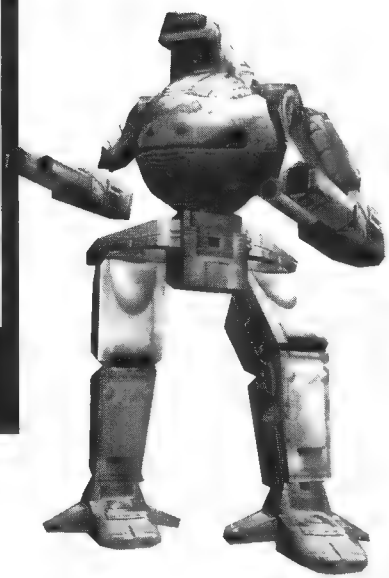


Figure 8-17. Destroy this BattleMech factory to complete your final goal.



CHAPTER 9
OPERATION 3

THIS OPERATION FEATURES six missions, some of which are relatively easy, but most of which are quite difficult. You're at a point where you need good combat skills to succeed; merely reading through the strategy section and following the directions won't be enough.

From here on, always use heavy 'Mechs with the maximum possible armor allocation. You face multiple heavy opponents with big weapons, and light armor gets you killed in most cases.

Place a tough long-range weapon group on your 'Mech for most subsequent missions, in addition to a medium-range weapon battery. A typical setup would include two Clan ER-PPCs for long-range power and a battery of seven or eight Medium Pulse Lasers for medium-range stopping power.

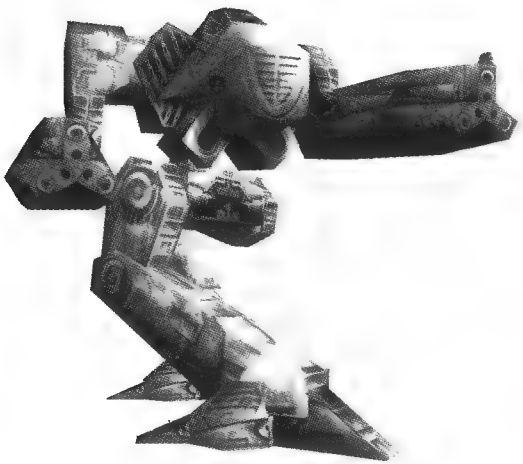
Your lancemates should pilot heavy 'Mechs as well, and they'll do best if almost all of their weapons are effective at long range; Clan Large ER Lasers and Clan ER PPCs, as well as LRM 20s with lots of ammo, are favorite weapons for lancemates.

Also, be advised that although heavy 'Mechs are recommended, 100-tonners can be so ungainly that they make your mission difficult. Mad Cats have excellent speed for such large 'Mechs, and are therefore recommended—though in some missions, slow 100-ton Annihilators work just fine. Read the individual Intelligence Briefings for details.

Be prepared to try some of these missions more than once.

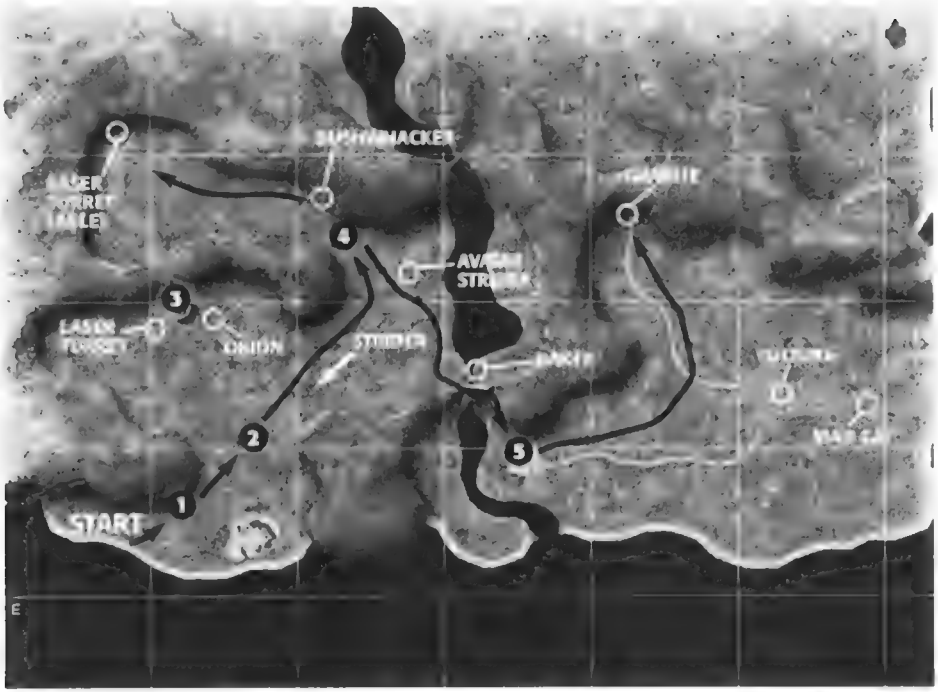
TIP

If your aim is poor, you can compensate somewhat by always using a Targeting Computer. Even if your aim is good, we recommend the Targeting Computer if you use ER-PPCs, LRMs, Autocannons, or Gauss Rifles, which are all good weapons for these late-game missions.



MISSION 1

BATTLE MAP



This relatively simple mission requires you to destroy a Smoke Jaguar field headquarters, then escort your MFBs across a winding section of countryside to their destination point. Along the way, you'll face a respectable number of enemy 'Mechs, but the addition of Epona Rhi to your team—plus the salvage of some large, powerful 'Mechs in the last mission—gives you a good chance of scoring a quick victory.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Destroy headquarters at Point Able (Primary)
- Escort MFBs to Point Charlie (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

The early stages of this mission feature a fairly large number of enemy 'Mechs milling around in a large area. You may encounter them in slightly different places than the walkthrough suggests, as they tend to move around freely in the practice fields south of Point Able.

This mission can be divided into two parts: the fight to take down the headquarters building, and the fight against a Smoke Jaguar commander. Both parts are relatively easy if you take the right 'Mechs for the job.

Take three heavy 'Mechs for this mission—an Annihilator and two Thors, for example. However, if you take the Annihilator you might want to add engine size for greater speed. As usual, you should have a long-range weapon group (consisting of, say, LRMs or Clan ER-PPCs) and a medium-range group (our favorite being multiple Clan Medium Pulse Lasers).

Your lancemates will do best if they have long-range weapons like Clan Large ER Lasers and Clan ER-PPCs. LRMs and SRMs are also good choices for lancemates because of their high accuracy and relatively plentiful supply of ammunition.

At this point you'll start running into difficult salvage choices, as you'll salvage many more weapons and 'Mechs than you can carry. You'll do fine if you:

- Pick a few weapons that you like, and stock up on those
- Discard weapons that you dislike
- Discard weapons that you've got Clan replacements for, because the Clan weapons are always better
- Periodically check to make sure that you've discarded ammo for discarded weapons, but stock up on ammo for preferred systems
- Only take along four or five 'Mechs instead of the maximum of six
- Gradually phase out standard armor in favor of Clan armor, and standard heat sinks in favor of Clan heat sinks

Your enemies in this mission include:

- 3 Laser Turrets
- 1 Orion
- 2 Striders
- 1 Avatar
- 1 Bushwhacker
- 1 Vulture
- 1 Mad Cat

STRATEGY

You start out well shielded from most of the map. Proceed east along the designated path to Point 1, where you'll start to get a wider view of the battlefield. An Orion and then a Strider will come into view from the north.

Hover near the ledge at Point 1 and let the Strider come to you. Blast it as it approaches. Now move to Point 2, out in the open field. The Orion is likely to retreat back into a cul-de-sac near Point Able, but an Avatar and another Strider are likely to approach from the north and engage you in the field. Take out the Avatar first, then the Strider—and don't forget to order your lancemates to attack!

After fighting any 'Mechs that engage you near Point 2, retreat to the MFBs and repair your 'Mechs. Then start following the path on the Battle Map again, proceeding northeast from Point 2 toward Point 4.

As you proceed north, you'll notice a laser turret to the west near Point 3, and another to the east near Point Baker; destroy both as you go.

Note that you're in a Smoke Jaguar training field. There are several fake Mad Cats littering the field—they're just dummies used for target practice. Don't be alarmed, therefore, if you see what appear to be multiple powered-down Mad Cats standing around (Figure 9-1).

Figure 9-1. Fake Mad Cats are scattered across the practice fields. Ignore them.

Also, you'll notice a structure with flashing red lights at Point 3 (Figure 9-2). This is the Smoke Jaguar training facility; it can't be destroyed, so ignore it.

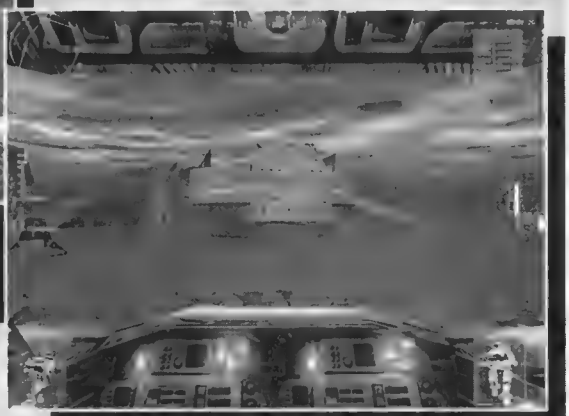


Figure 9-2. Ignore this structure; it isn't mission-critical.

Around Point 4, you'll round a corner and come into view of Point Able. Any 'Mechs that didn't confront you near Point 2 (usually, the Orion from earlier and a Bushwhacker you haven't seen before) tend to be milling around Point Able and will attack as soon as you appear. Charge forward and destroy these 'Mechs, using your lancemates as much as possible. You'll also have to destroy a single laser turret near the base of the headquarters building.

When the enemies are cleared out, target the headquarters building (Figure 9-3) and destroy it with concentrated fire. When it's destroyed, return to the MFBs for repairs. (You can have the MFBs move into the training field near Point 3 to speed the process.)

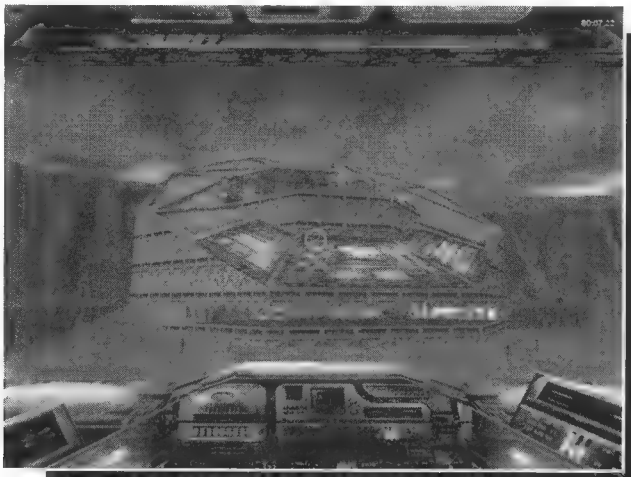
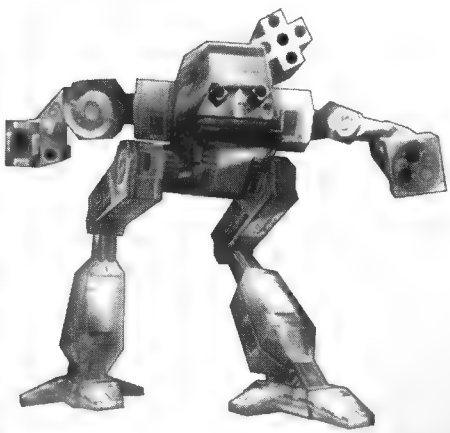


Figure 9-3. Destroy this headquarters building.

Figure 9-4. Proceed through the tunnel, dead ahead.

When all your 'Mechs are fixed, proceed east and follow the path on the Battle Map that leads to Point 5. This path leads you through a short, reinforced tunnel (Figure 9-4).

On the other side of the tunnel, as you walk past Point 5, you'll notice a Vulture and a Mad Cat powering up in the ruins to the east. Head straight toward these enemies when they appear. Attack them in the ruins, sending your lancemates ahead to attack one 'Mech while you target the other.



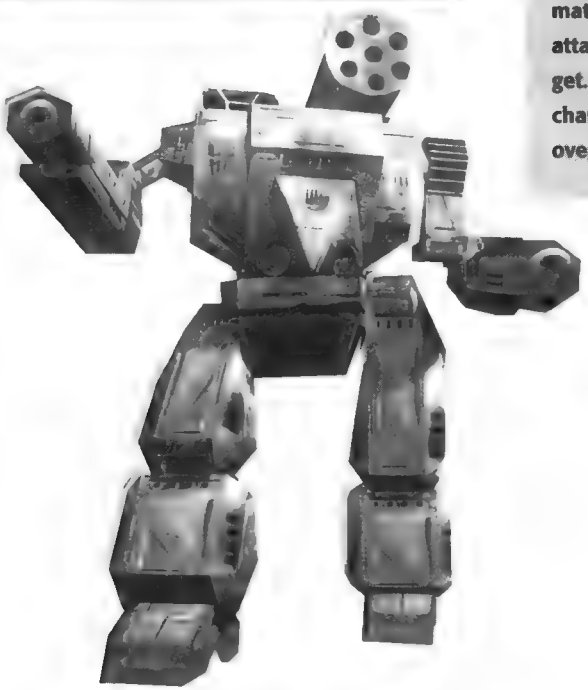
When both 'Mechs are down, march north to Point Charlie, which is near another tunnel (Figure 9-5). Summon your MFBs to meet you there, and the mission is a success.

Figure 9-5. Summon your MFBs to meet you here.

TIP

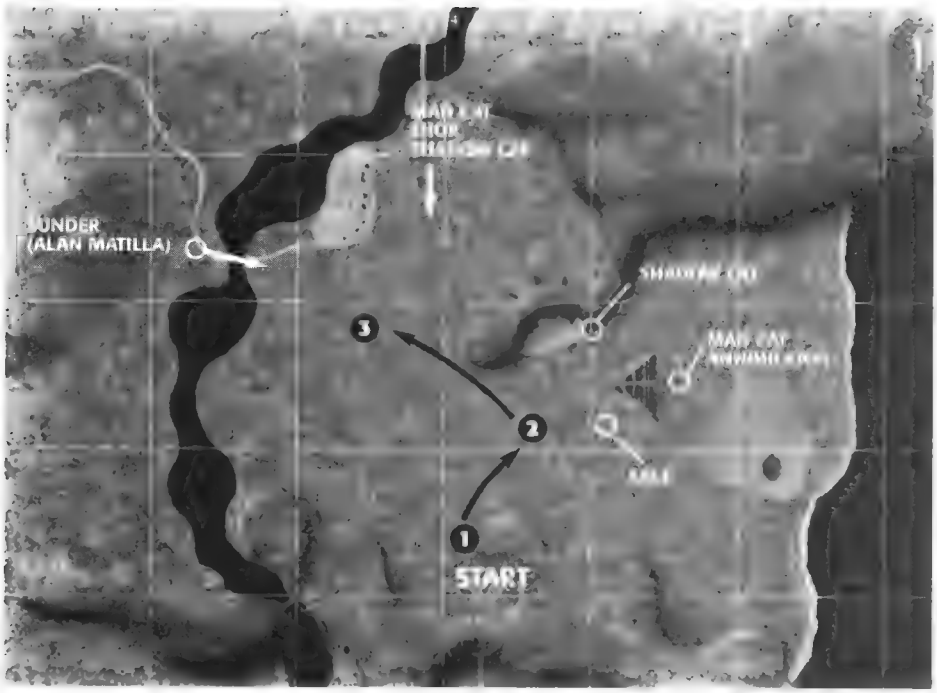
Again, it's critical to realize that as you proceed deeper into the campaign, you must use your lancemates more and more. Your enemies will always concentrate their fire on you if you never order your lancemates to attack, so remember to issue those attack orders, and spare some wear and tear on your 'Mech.

Also, realize that it's generally best to have all your lancemates simultaneously attack the same target. This increases the chances that they'll overwhelm it quickly.



MISSION 2

BATTLE MAP



This is a quick, brutal mission emphasizing long-range combat and requiring heavy, well-armored 'Mechs. There's no time for repairs, so you'll just have to take a deep breath and plunge into the fray.

The mission is centered around a pyramid-shaped Smoke Jaguar fortress at Point Able. You start out very close to this fortress, so getting there isn't the trick. The trick is wresting control of this fortress from some very heavy Smoke Jaguar enemies, then maintaining control as a second wave of Jaguars appears from the north.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Take control of fortress at Point Able (Primary)
- Protect fortress core at Point Able (Final)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This mission is simple in concept, but it requires heavy firepower and accuracy. All three of your team's 'Mechs should be heavy and equipped with potent long-range weapons. LRM 20s, ER-PPCs, and ER Large Lasers are all appropriate, as are Targeting Computers, which will help with long-range gunnery.

You *might* be able to spare a moment to fix your 'Mechs during this mission, but don't count on it. Instead, you should try to use the terrain to minimize damage to your 'Mechs during your first major fight, then charge directly into the second fight. The enemies you'll face in this mission are:

- 1 Annihilator
- 2 Mad Cats
- 2 Shadow Cats
- 1 Thor

STRATEGY

You start out in a well-protected cul-de-sac. Move slightly north to Point 1, where you'll leave the shelter of the cul-de-sac. Two BattleMechs, a Mad Cat, and an Annihilator will power up behind the pyramid-shaped fortress at Point Able (Figure 9-6).

Figure 9-6. This pyramid-shaped structure is the fortress you're fighting over.

Now fall back toward your starting position—far enough that only one of the two enemy BattleMechs is visible. Blast the lone visible 'Mech with LRM, PPC, Gauss Rifle, or ER Large Laser fire, meanwhile moving back and forth somewhat so you aren't hit with *all* the return fire.

When the first 'Mech is gone, a Shadow Cat is

likely to appear from the north. Run out onto the plains near Point 2 and order your lancemates to attack the Shadow Cat, meanwhile targeting the remaining original enemy yourself.

When the Mad Cat, Annihilator, and Shadow Cat are gone, you'll assume control of the pyramid-shaped fortress. However, you don't have any time for repairs. Three new 'Mechs will march down from the northwest: a Mad Cat, a Thor, and a Shadow Cat. Run toward Point 3, where you'll intercept these enemies.

At the same time that these enemies appear, a Sunder piloted by Alan Matilla will march in from the west. This provides a distraction, making your job easier.

There'll be a big fight at Point 3 (Figure 9-7). Remember to order your lancemates to attack targets, and fight your best fight. When all three enemy 'Mechs have fallen, you'll have won the mission.

Figure 9-7. A massive fight is unavoidable. Charge in and take your best shot.

TIP

If you get severely damaged while fighting near Point 1, you might be able to sneak into the MFBs for repairs—but it will be tough. A better bet is to keep moving and kill your targets quickly, so that you don't get too badly damaged.

TIP

Unless you move to intercept the three new Smoke Jaguars quickly, they'll tear apart Alan's Sunder; after all, he's severely outmatched without your help. This is why you should charge into battle near Point 3 rather than hanging back and engaging in a long-range fight.

TIP

This is a mission featuring a simple premise but difficult combat, so above all else, you'll need to fight skillfully to survive.

MISSION 3

BATTLE MAP

Your task in this mission is to recover salvage from the remains of the dropship *Blackhammer*. This is another conceptually straightforward mission, especially if you follow the suggestions in the walkthrough.

Unlike the last mission, this mission allows you time for repairs. Your objectives are as follows:

- Secure dropship with MFB at Point Able
- Protect dropship from attack

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

You'll want large 'Mechs for this mission, but huge 'Mechs like the Annihilator are probably too slow. Try Mad Cats and Orions, which combine good size with maneuverability. These 'Mechs will help you respond to enemies that come from different directions.

Make sure that your teammates have potent long-range weapons. You'll want both long-range and medium-range weapons for your own 'Mech.

The enemy roster includes:

- 3 Striders
- 3 Avatars
- 2 Owens
- 1 Orion
- 5 Elementals
- 3 Donars

STRATEGY

You start out near a river. Cross the small bridge (Figure 9-8) and approach Point 1; wait there for a moment for enemies to start appearing.

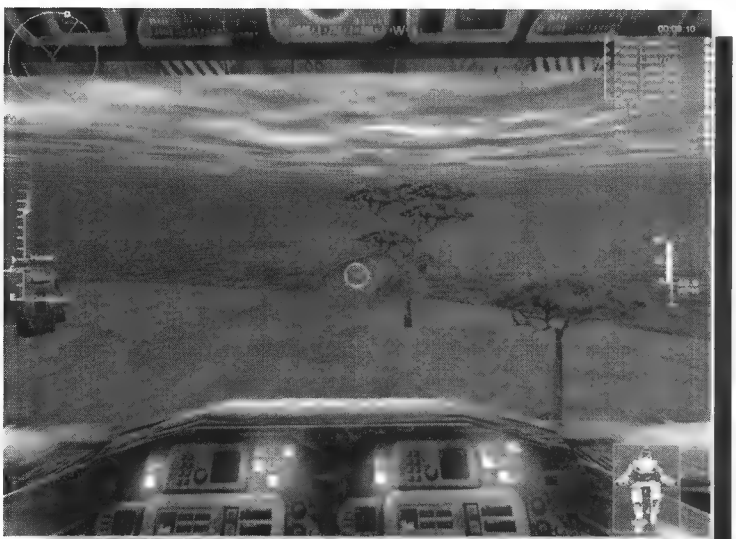


Figure 9-8. This small bridge is fragile. If your 'Mechs are 90 tons or heavier, you may want to avoid it and wade through the shallows instead.

TIP

Be careful as you cross the bridge; it can be broken. You also can cross the river in the shallows located slightly to the north or south of the bridge; you'll have to if the bridge is broken.

First, an Avatar will power up to the west. Blast it as it crests a ridge, taking it down as quickly as possible.

Next, a pair of Striders will march up from the south. Target them with long-range weapons as they approach, but don't chase them—they'll come to you. (Like you, they're headed for the dropship.)

A third and final Strider will then appear from the northeast, taking a course that leads it toward the remains of the dropship at Point Able. Intercept it and destroy it.

When all visible enemies are gone, order the MFBs to Point 2 and meet them there. Fully repair all of your BattleMechs.

When repairs are done, proceed west to Point Able. Five Elementals will appear from the west as you approach; destroy them and keep moving.

Inspect the ruins of the dropship at Point Able (Figure 9-9) and then order the MFBs to Point Able. As the MFBs approach, walk up to Point 3, which is a hill that gives you a good view of the surrounding area.

TIP

A trio of Donar helicopters may harass you at any point during this mission. Target them with lasers and gun them down whenever they appear.

Targeting Computers are particularly useful for helping you hit these fast-moving targets.

Figure 9-9. Examine the ruins of the dropship.

As the MFBs move into position, two groups of enemies will appear. A pair of Avatars and an Orion will appear to the north, and a pair of Owens will appear from the south. Have your entire group attack the Owens first, then head north to intercept the Avatars and Orion before they get too close to the dropship.

TIP

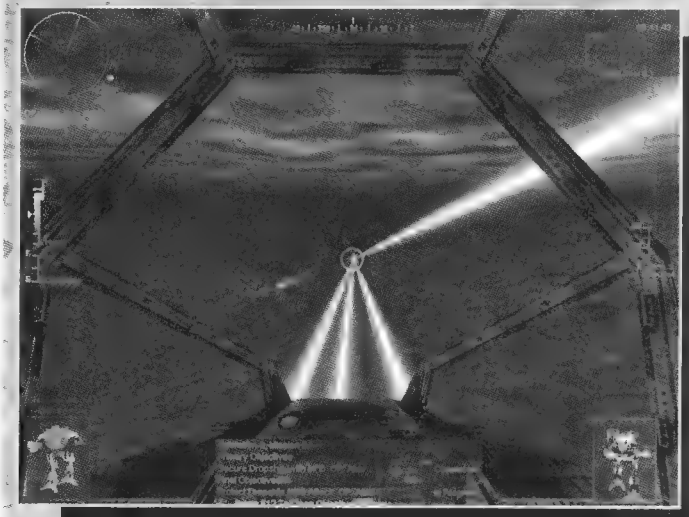
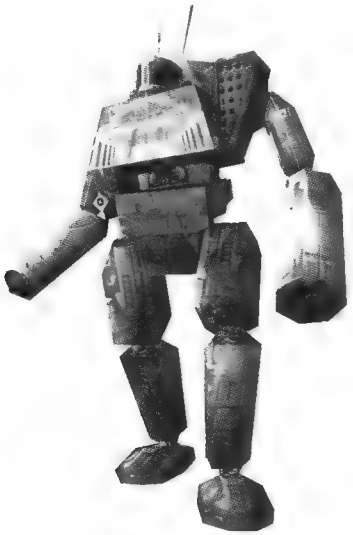


Figure 9-10. Fight the Avatars and Orion from long range.

You can either fight from the hilltop and use long-range weapons, or hide behind a hillside and blast the enemy with close-range weapons as they come around it. Take the long-range approach (Figure 9-10).

It's imperative not to lead the charge as you attack the three Jaguars approaching from the north. Your 'Mech will sustain way too much abuse if you do. Lag slightly behind your attacking lancemates, and remember to approach the enemy at a slight angle so it's harder to hit you.

The mission is a success when all Smoke Jaguars are defeated.



TIP

This is another mission where there's really no "trick" to winning; it's just a matter of fighting well. You may have to try it several times.

MISSION 4

BATTLE MAP

This mission requires you to destroy multiple bridges to cut off an escaping truck convoy. This is a confusing mission featuring multiple targets and multiple enemies, but with help from the walkthrough you should make it through intact.

Unfortunately, this is also another mission that doesn't offer much time for repairs.

Your tasks are as follows:

- **Destroy facilities and bridge at Point Able (Primary)**
- **Destroy central bridge at Point Baker (Primary)**
- **Destroy towers and bridge at Point Charlie (Primary)**
- **Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)**
- **Destroy Ratache Osis (Final)**

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

As usual, take large 'Mechs—but don't take slow 100-tonners. Fast 75-tonners are ideal. Give your lancemates long-range weapons, and take both long-range and medium-range weapons for yourself.

Your enemies in this mission will include:

- 1 Shadow Cat
- 1 Black Hawk
- 1 Mad Cat
- 4 trucks (noncombatant)
- 2 Autocannon turrets
- 2 SRM turrets
- 1 Cauldron-Born
- 1 Vulture
- 1 Thor

Note that different versions of the game may require slightly different strategies for this mission. If the strategy detailed in the walkthrough doesn't work, then try allowing the convoy to cross the first bridge before destroying all three bridges, thus trapping the convoy on the central island.

You shouldn't attack the convoy trucks because they contain valuable salvage, but your lancemates may attack them anyway. Target other enemies and stay well away from the trucks to prevent your lancemates from firing at them.

TIP

After winning the mission, be sure to take one of the salvaged TAG systems included amongst the spoils. At least one TAG is vital for the next mission.

STRATEGY

Your forces start out to the west of the three bridges. Immediately start moving east. Target a Shadow Cat standing on a high ledge to the southeast as you move, and either destroy it or damage it until it retreats.

Keep moving east, destroying an Autocannon turret to the north along the way. As you approach the vicinity of Point 1, target the SRM turrets near Point Able. Destroy them, and target the Black Hawk standing in one of the two pyramid-shaped structures nearby. Order your lancemates to rush in and attack it.

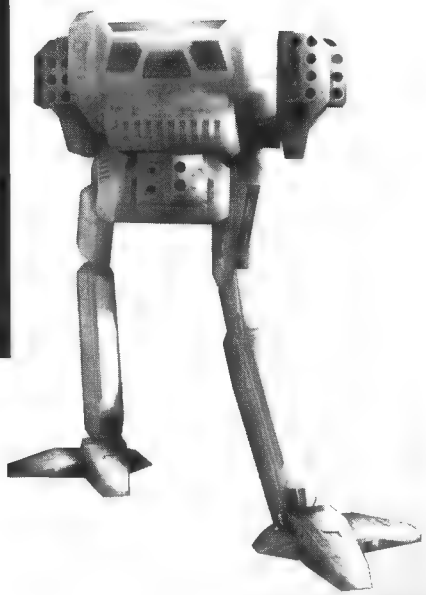
There will be fierce combat near Point 1, as the Black Hawk fights alongside a Cauldron-Born, which moves in from the north, and a Mad Cat accompanying the convoy, which will soon approach from the south. Take out the Black Hawk first, then attack whichever 'Mech is closest. Retreat as you fight, staying out of your enemy's medium-range weapons systems. Be sure to have your lancemates attack enemies to cut down on wear and tear on your 'Mech.

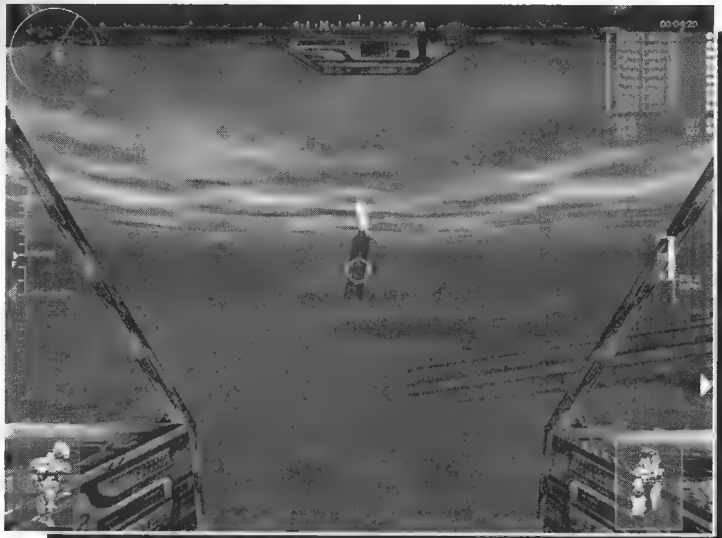
TIP

Don't target the four convoy trucks, or your lancemates will shoot them.

When the 'Mechs are gone, destroy the bridge at Point Able (Figure 9-11), as well as the two pyramid-shaped structures nearby (Figure 9-12). The convoy may or may not have slipped across the bridge; this doesn't matter, as long as you aren't far behind it.

Figure 9-11. Take out the bridge at Point Able.





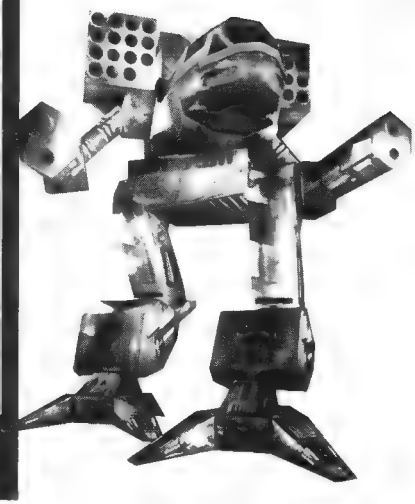


Figure 9-12. Destroy these pyramid-shaped buildings after all other targets in the area are gone.

When the Point Able targets are destroyed, move directly north as shown on the Battle Map. As you pass Point 2, shoot out the bridge at Point Baker. Then turn your attention to a Vulture lurking in this area.

After quickly dispatching the Vulture, continue northeast along the designated path to Point 3. Shoot out the bridge and the two laser towers at Point Charlie from here (Figure 9-13), as well as the Autocannon turret to the east.

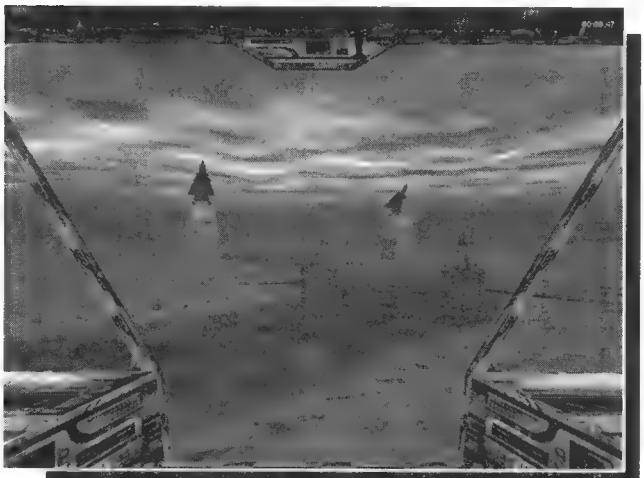


Figure 9-13. Destroy both the bridge and the two laser towers flanking it.

TIP

If the convoy crossed the bridge at Point Able, you have now trapped it on this side of the river. If it didn't cross that bridge, it'll be able to continue along its way despite the bridges you've destroyed.

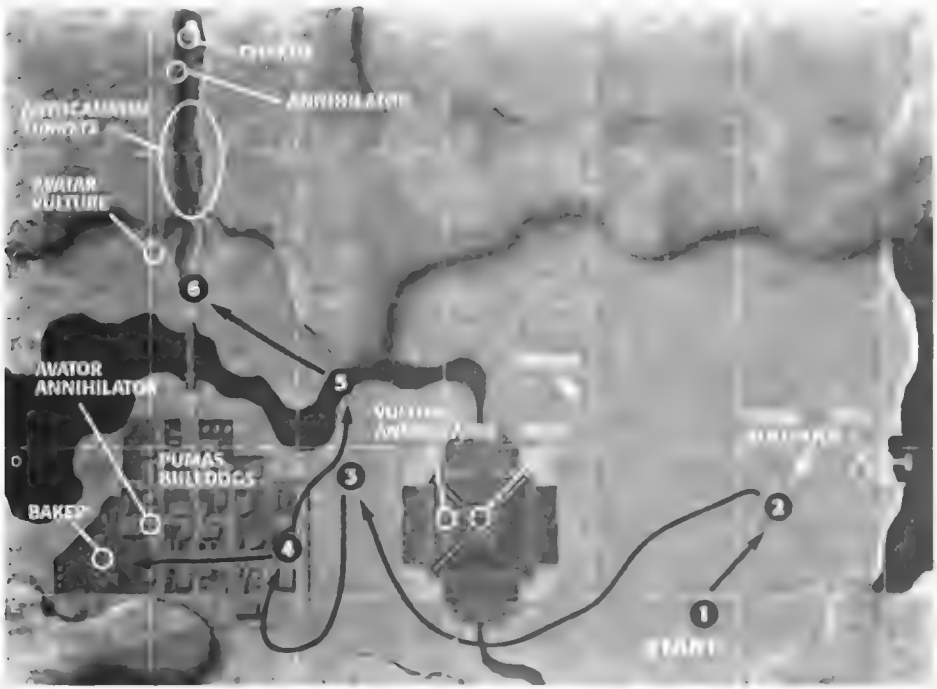
Because you'll lose if the convoy escapes the edge of the map, your best bet is simply to execute your mission goals quickly—before the trucks escape. Don't worry about them otherwise; just ignore them and work quickly.

As you destroy the structures near Point Charlie, a Smoke Jaguar commander named Ratache Osis will appear from the north, piloting a Thor. Destroy him from long range.

Now that all of your goals have been achieved, quit out of the mission before the convoy trucks escape the mission area.

MISSION 5

BATTLE MAP



In this mission, your primary task is to take out crucial structures in the Smoke Jaguars' military city of Durgan. When these structures are gone, you must escape to the north through the only available route: a narrow, heavily fortified corridor sealed with a massive gate. You'll need the TAG equipment salvaged from the last mission to open the gate.

TIP

Actually, depending on your version of the game, you might *not* need the TAG. But take one along on your 'Mech just in case.

This is a very difficult mission, pitting you against several massive enemies and featuring lots of tough combat. You'll need good combat skills to make it through intact.

Your mission goals are as follows:

- Destroy urban complex at Point Baker (Primary)
- Blast open corridor gate at Point Charlie (Primary)
- Take over loading dock at Point Dog (Secondary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

To beat this mission, equip yourself and your teammates with extremely heavy 'Mechs and extremely potent long-range weaponry: Clan LRM 20s, Clan ER-PPCs, Clan Gauss Rifles, and Clan Large ER Lasers. Use Targeting Computers to improve the accuracy of these weapons and to target specific body parts when firing LRMs.

Make sure that all of your lancemates' 'Mechs have enough heat sinks to fire their weapons quickly, and don't bother giving them any short-range weapons. Make sure all 'Mechs are armored as fully as possible.

The reason for all this long-range weaponry will become clear once you enter this mission: your opponents include three Annihilators and multiple Autocannon turrets, which you don't want to get anywhere near. The ability to strike at extreme range with extreme power, therefore, is extremely valuable.

You'll need patience to beat this mission. Hang back and, if your enemies advance on you, retreat as you fight. Repair your 'Mechs whenever possible. Your success is predicated on your patience and ability to maintain long range, where your weapons are superior. Most of your enemies will lack serious punch at long range—save for the Pumas, which are light enough that you can shred them quickly, before they do much damage.

Make no mistake, though; this is a hard mission. Your enemies include:

- 2 Owens
- 3 Pumas
- 3 Annihilators
- 2 Vultures
- 5 Bulldogs
- 2 Avatars
- 5 Autocannon turrets

STRATEGY

You start out on an open plain, at the spot indicated on the Battle Map. Prepare your long-range weapons and move just slightly north of your starting position, to Point 1. Stop here.

A pair of Owens will appear from the north. Gun them down quickly with long-range attacks. As you're fighting the Owens, an Annihilator and a Vulture will power up on the pyramidal structure to the west. A Puma also will run into the picture, from the vicinity of Point Dog. Immediately turn your attention to the Annihilator. You can move around somewhat to avoid fire from your enemies, but don't stray too far from Point 1.

When the Annihilator's gone, target your other enemies in whatever order is most convenient. Destroy them all from the vicinity of Point 1. Your 'Mechs' long-range attacking power should be better than that of your foes, so you can afford to just stand there and slug it out from a distance.

TIP

Approaching an Annihilator is a bad idea, as it exposes you to the Annihilator's potent short-range or medium-range Autocannons. That's why you want to stay more or less in place and attack the Annihilator from afar.

Your lancemates will automatically shoot at the Annihilator as long as you're targeting it. Don't order them to attack; if you do that, they'll get too close to the Annihilator and get shredded. If you equipped them as explained in the Intelligence Briefing, they should be well prepared to attack at long range.

TIP

A second Vulture will roam around in the distance, off to the north, as you fight. If you stay close to Point 1, however, it'll move off to the west and eventually wind up near an Avatar in the northwest central part of the map. You'll have to deal with it later.

This initial fight is a tough one, but with the proper long-range, heavy weaponry, you can win it without taking severe damage.

When all visible enemies are gone, proceed east toward Point 2, along the designated path. A pair of Bulldogs will appear near Point Dog. Destroy both to complete one of your secondary objectives (taking control of the loading dock).

Return to your MFBs and repair all 'Mechs fully, then travel west along the path marked on your Battle Map, toward Point 3. As you approach Point 3, a trio of Bulldogs will exit the city walls. Destroy them as they appear.

At Point 3, you'll be able to enter the city through a gap in the wall. There will be two Pumas lurking around in there. Destroy both Pumas from Point 3, if you can. If one or both Pumas can't be seen from Point 3, slowly proceed west from Point 3, into the city. Only go far enough into the city to find and destroy the Pumas, and no farther. Retreat to Point 3 when you've destroyed both of them.

TIP

If you venture too close to the southwest part of the city you'll trigger more enemies—and you don't want that, yet.

Summon the MFBs to Point 3 and repair your 'Mechs again. Then follow the path leading south from Point 3, looping down through a hole in the southeast corner of the city walls and making your way to Point 4.

From Point 4 you can proceed due west. Do so very slowly. At some point, an Annihilator and an Avatar will power up in front of you. Immediately duck behind a building and make your way back to Point 4 without letting either enemy get a direct shot at you.

Now fight your enemies from Point 4, targeting the Annihilator first. Your enemies will tend to remain near the spots where they powered up, and if you fight them from Point 4, your long-range weapons will have the edge.

After dispatching the Annihilator and Avatar, follow the path west to Point Baker. Destroy the buildings there (Figure 9-14)—your lancemates will probably do it for you—and then backtrack through the southeast corner of the city to Point 3. Have the MFBs repair your 'Mechs.

Figure 9-14. Destroy the buildings at Point Baker.

TIP

A good tactic is to hide behind a building near Point 4, then run out from cover to fire a few shots, and then retreat again while your weapons recharge.

Regardless of what you do, the key is to maintain long range from the Annihilator. If it advances on your position, retreat, exiting the city if necessary. Fight only when you can shoot at the Annihilator from a distance.

When repairs are complete, move north along the path leading to Point 5. Cross the river at Point 5 and move *slowly* toward Point 6. A Vulture that you may have seen earlier and an Avatar are lurking off to the west. Destroy them both with long-range fire, meanwhile taking care not to enter the view of the Autocannon turrets lining the passage to the northwest.

If necessary, go back to the MFBs for repairs. Then, move along to Point 6, which is the beginning of a long trench leading north to a gate. This trench is lined with five Autocannon turrets, and there's an Annihilator lurking at the very end of the trench.

Gun down the Autocannon turrets, starting with the nearest and making your way to the farthest. Don't advance as you do this; stay back, near Point 6. When the Autocannon turrets are gone, attack the Annihilator with long-range weapons—again, keep your distance, and retreat if the Annihilator advances on your position.

When all enemies are gone, move north and fire your TAG at the gate at Point Charlie. When the gate is destroyed (Figure 9-15), verify that all your objectives are complete. Then exit the mission.

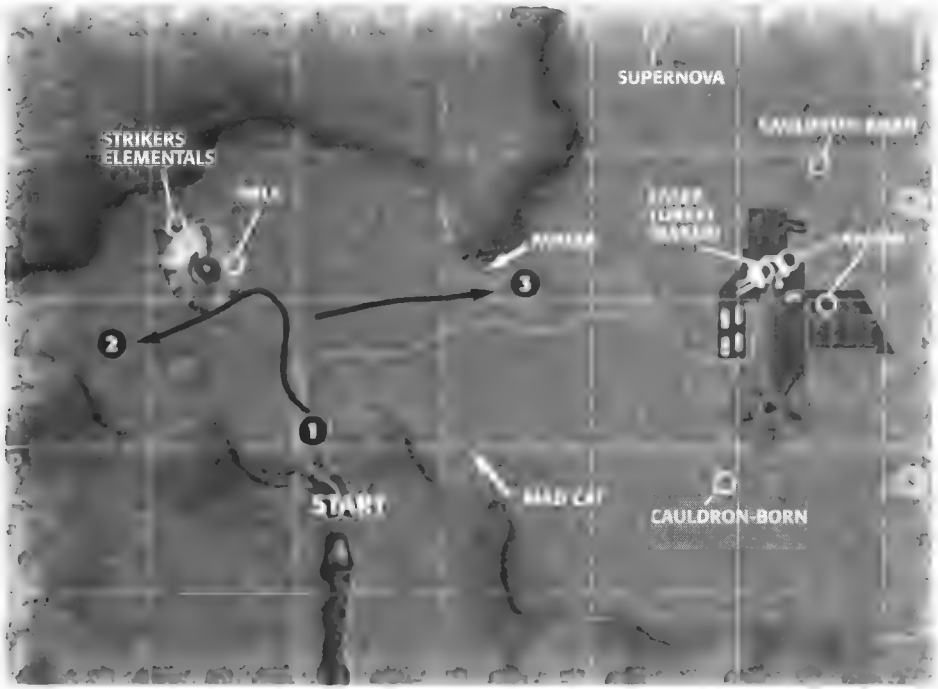
Figure 9-15. When the gate has been destroyed, your mission is a success.

TIP

Depending on your version of the game, it also may be possible to destroy the gate at Charlie just by firing conventional weapons at it.

MISSION 6

BATTLE MAP



In this final mission of this leg of the campaign, your task is to destroy a Smoke Jaguar fortress and then destroy a Spaceport. Doing so should deal a severe blow to the Jaguar war effort. The mission ends in a confrontation with an old nemesis.

As with the last few missions, extremely long-range weapons will help you to emerge victorious. This battle takes place on open terrain, allowing you to capitalize on the extreme range of ER-PPCs and other long-range weapons.

Your objectives are as follows:

- **Destroy fortress at Point Able (Primary)**
- **Destroy Spaceport at Point Baker (Primary)**
- **Defeat Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)**
- **Defeat Osis (Final)**

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

Just as you did in the last mission, take heavy 'Mechs and load them with long-range weapons. You might want to pilot a 100-ton Annihilator with both ER-PPCs and a battery of Medium Pulse Lasers to deal with both distant foes and any threats that manage to approach to medium range.

This isn't a particularly difficult mission if you repair your 'Mechs at the appropriate times and are extremely slow and methodical in your advances. Charging into battle is inadvisable; instead, hang back and allow the excellent range of your weapons to give you an edge.

Your enemies in this mission include:

- 5 Strikers
- 4 Elementals
- 3 Avatars
- 1 Mad Cat
- 2 Cauldron-Borns
- 1 laser turret
- 1 Supernova

STRATEGY

Your forces start out in a sheltered area. Start marching slowly north, toward Point Able.

As you near Point 1, several Strikers and Elementals will power up near Point Able. Pick off any Strikers or Elementals that you can see from long range, meanwhile continuing to march slowly toward Point Able. Methodically destroy enemies as you march.

When you reach Point Able, take out the fortress by targeting its central column, then blasting any supporting walls that hold up the central disc of the roof (Figure 9-16). (Your lancemates will target this structure automatically if they get close enough.)

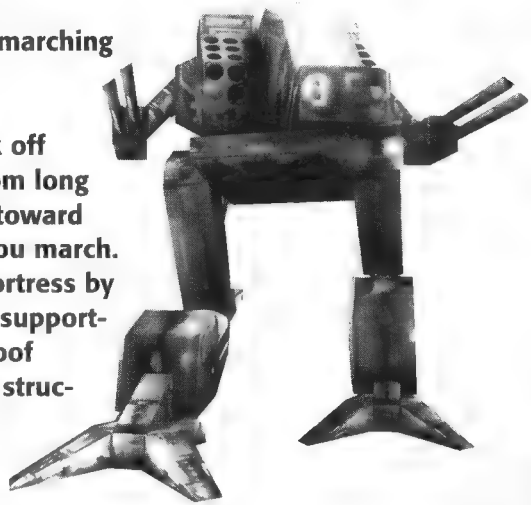


Figure 9-16. Destroy the central column, and any wall that holds up the central disc.

Now a pair of 'Mechs is likely to move in from the east: an Avatar from the northeast, and a Mad Cat from the southeast. Stay near Point Able and greet them with long-range fire. Don't charge toward them; just take them out from long range.
After both 'Mechs are destroyed, order your MFBs to Point 2. Meet them there and thoroughly repair your 'Mechs.

March east to Point 3. Pause when a laser turret and an Avatar appear on your radar near Point Baker. A Cauldron-Born will now appear from the northeast, and another may appear from the southeast. Concentrate your long-range fire on both Cauldron-Borns, taking them down before they get too close.

If the Avatar starts moving, you'll have to take it out as well. When no moving enemies are left on screen, feel free to return to the MFBs for repairs. When repairs are done, approach Point Baker again. A second Avatar will become visible behind the Spaceport. Destroy it.

TIP

A trio of Donar helicopters may harass you as you approach the Spaceport. Take them down with laser or missile fire, as usual.

When all visible enemies are gone, attack the Spaceport. Take down the main building by shooting a pressurized cylinder inside it (Figure 9-17), then start shooting the many long, low outlying structures (Figure 9-18) surrounding the main building. (Your lancemates may take down the Spaceport before you even get a chance to attack it.)

TIP

If you approach too close to the Spaceport, you may trigger all the 'Mechs in the vicinity simultaneously—two Avatars and two Cauldron-Borns. Taking on all four 'Mechs at once isn't an impossible fight by any means, but it's easier to advance just far enough to see one or two of these enemies, then back off and fight them, then advance again until more enemies appear.

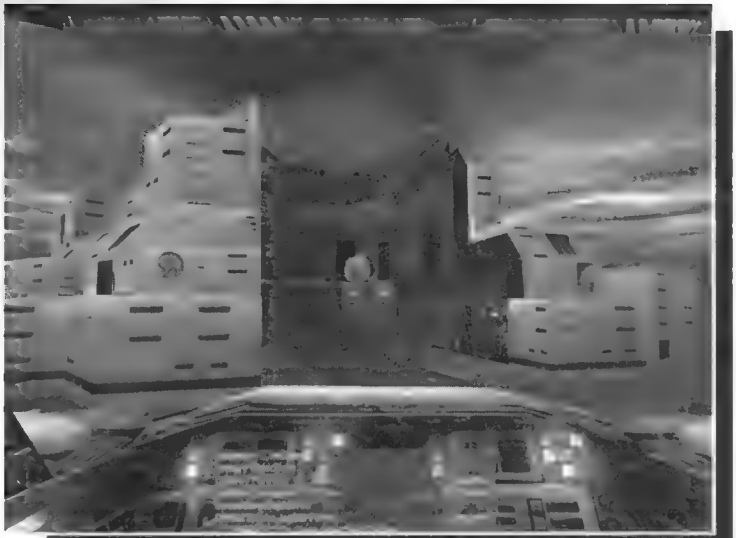


Figure 9-17. Shoot the pressurized cylinder inside the Spaceport's main building.

When the Spaceport is fully dismantled, a Supernova piloted by Ratache Osis appears from the north. Take the 'Mech down from long range, with the help of your lancemates. Then verify that you've achieved all mission goals, and exit the mission area.

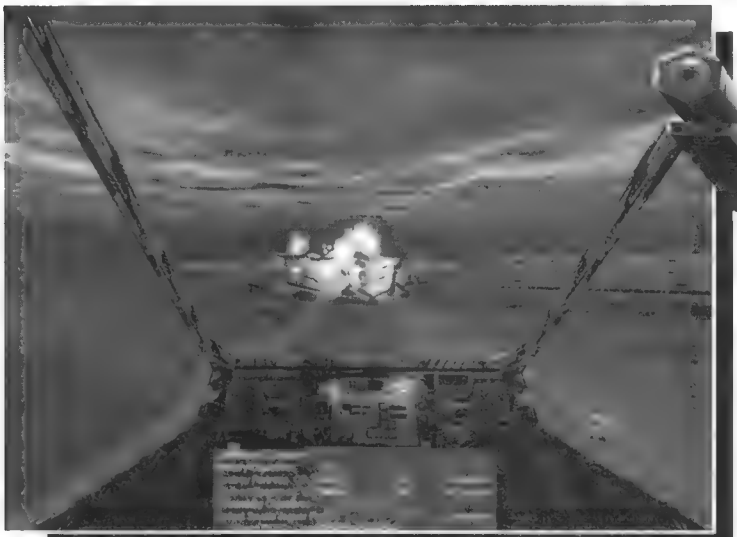
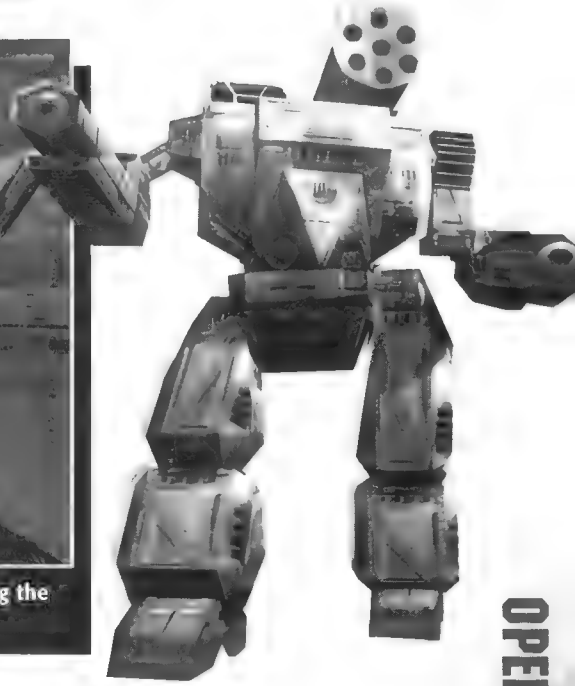
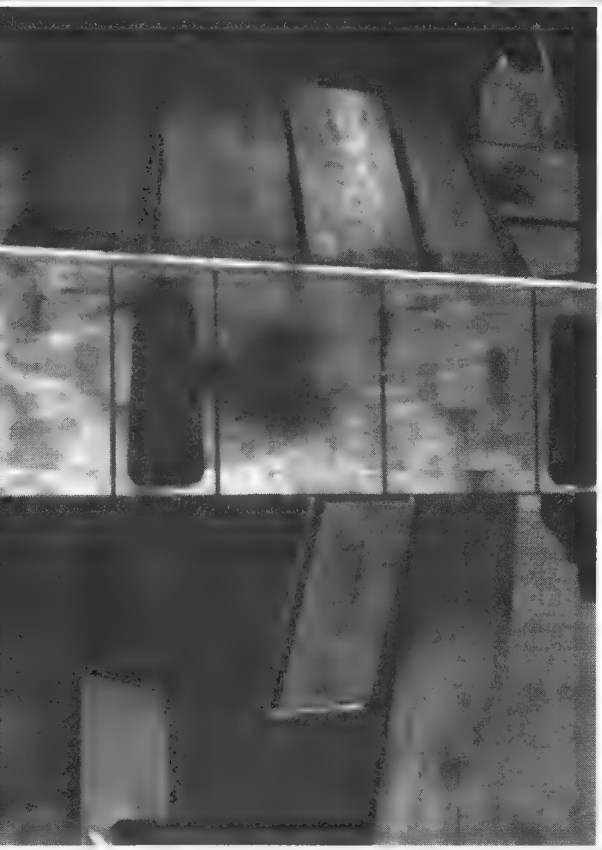


Figure 9-18. Destroy the long, low structures surrounding the Spaceport's main building.



CHAPTER 10
OPERATION 4

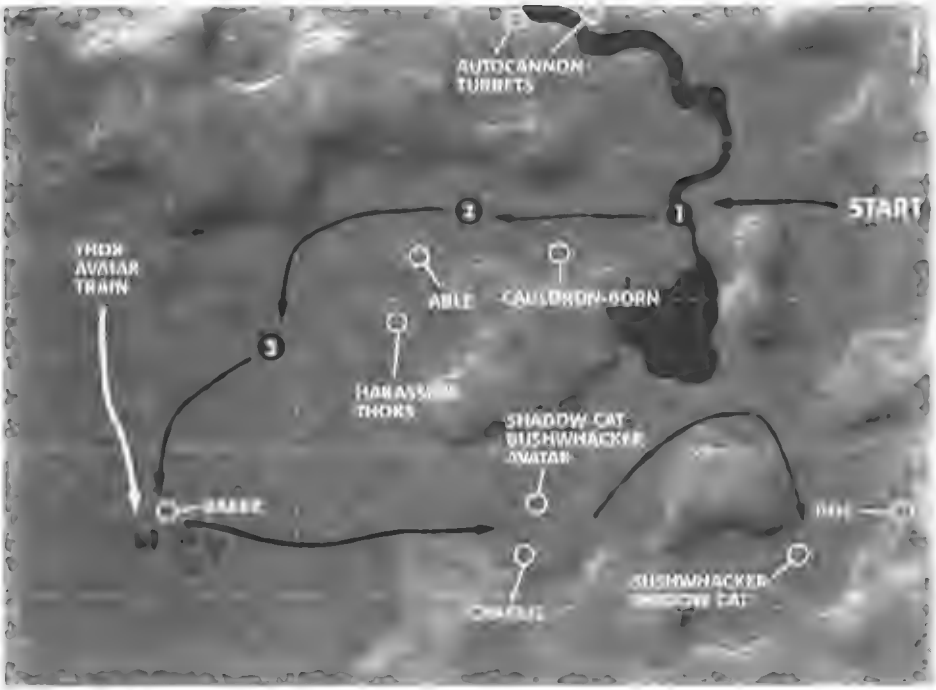


THIS IS THE FINAL OPERATION of your commando strike; it encompasses a total of six missions. These missions invariably require heavy 'Mechs and powerful weapons, just as the last six did.

If there's anything that distinguishes this group of missions, it's the need for patience. You'll need patience to continually repair your 'Mechs, even after relatively minor battles, and patience to pick away at your enemies from long range instead of charging in for a quicker kill. Your patience will be put to the test in these last six missions.

MISSION 1

BATTLE MAP



This tricky mission requires you to destroy a train before it escapes the map, and to destroy three vital Smoke Jaguar communication towers. Destroying the train is far and away the hardest part, requiring you to fight many enemy 'Mechs quickly, with little or no time for repairs. However, once you've destroyed the train, the rest of the mission should be fairly simple.

Your objectives are:

- Destroy north tower at Point Able (Primary)
- Destroy south tower at Point Charlie (Primary)
- Destroy east tower at Point Dog (Primary)
- Destroy supply train at Point Baker (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

Don't take any slow 'Mechs for this mission. If you take 90-tonners or 100-tonners, increase their engine size so their top speed is at least 70 kph. Mad Cats are ideal because they possess both good size and good speed.

You'll have to move quickly and dispatch enemies quickly to succeed in this mission. You'll also have to make good use of your lancemates, sending them ahead to attack targets so your own 'Mech isn't destroyed. Equip everyone with relatively long-range weapons like Clan ER Large Lasers, and be sure to take a potent medium-range weapon group for yourself, in addition to long-range weapons. You can't afford to hang back and snipe at enemies in the early stages of this mission; because of time constraints, you'll need to approach your enemies and finish them off quickly.

Take the early stages of the mission quickly. Don't be surprised if your 'Mechs are thoroughly battered by the time you reach the train; this is a hard mission.

Your enemies are as follows:

- 2 Cauldron-Borns
- 2 Autocannon turrets
- 3 Harassers
- 3 Thors
- 2 Avatars
- 2 Bushwhackers
- 2 Shadow Cats

STRATEGY

Immediately after powering up, proceed west toward Point 1 at full speed. Simultaneously, order the MFBs to Point 2.

As you approach Point 1, you'll see a pair of Cauldron-Borns off to the west, headed toward you. Order your lancemates to attack, and keep moving forward as you fight. Cross the river at Point 1 and keep moving toward Point 2. Try to destroy the Cauldron-Borns quickly enough that you don't have to pause for long.

As you approach Point 2, a pair of Autocannon turrets will show up on radar, well to the north. Ignore them; they're out of the way and time is of the essence.

TIP

Your lancemates are likely to destroy the communication tower at Point Able (Figure 10-1) as you run by, so you don't have to worry about it.

Figure 10-1. Your lancemates usually destroy the tower at Point Able automatically as you pass it.

Near Point 2, you'll see a group of enemies to the southwest, including three Harassers and a pair of Thors. The Harassers will stick around to fight, but the Thors will retreat toward the train station at Point Baker. Destroy the Harassers quickly, then pursue the Thors. Again, order your lancemates to attack, and let them get out in front of you so you aren't always the enemy's primary target.

Destroy both Thors somewhere in the vicinity of Point 3. As you fight, you may notice the train you're supposed to destroy: it's off to the west, moving south toward the station at Baker. It's accompanied by another Thor and an Avatar.

Approach the Thor and Avatar, and fight them. Have your lancemates run ahead to attack, and target the 'Mechs' legs if possible.

TIP

You may have the opportunity to repair one 'Mech at Point 2 when the MFBs get there—but time is of the essence, so it's tricky. Ideally, you should go without repairs until the train is destroyed.

As you approach the train station, blast the train (Figure 10-2) with long-range weapons. If you didn't destroy the Thor and Avatar accompanying the train earlier, you'll have to do so now.

Figure 10-2. Destroy the train as it waits in the station.

TIP

If you failed to notice the Thor and Avatar, don't worry; just move along to Point Baker. They'll be waiting there, along with the train.

When the train is destroyed and no more enemies are visible near Point Baker, you can breathe easier; the hardest part of the mission is over. Summon the MFBs from Point 2 to the vicinity of Point Baker and repair all your 'Mechs.

When the 'Mechs are repaired, proceed east toward Point Charlie. As you go, you'll uncover a Shadow Cat, a Bushwhacker, and an Avatar. These enemies will retreat from you; harass them with long-range fire and force them to fight. When you've destroyed all three enemies, destroy the communication tower at Point Charlie, and then repair again if necessary.

Now follow the path on the Battle Map that leads to Point Dog. You'll encounter a Bushwhacker and a Shadow Cat in the vicinity of Point Dog. Destroy both, then destroy the communication tower there.

With all three towers down and the train destroyed, your mission is complete.

MISSION 2

BATTLE MAP

This mission requires you to level a Smoke Jaguar village, then take out another of the laser towers that guard the skies above the planet. Because you start the mission in the center of the action, a good policy is simply to dig in and hold your ground against the waves of enemies that almost immediately attack you. If you manage to weather this initial storm, the rest of the mission will prove to be less difficult.

Your objectives are as follows:

- **Destroy village at Point Able (Primary)**
- **Destroy laser tower at Point Baker (Primary)**
- **Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Secondary)**

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This is another mission where a combination of long-range weapons and patience will win the day. Load up on your favorite heavy 'Mechs, your favorite heavy weapons, and a battery of medium-range weapons for finishing off enemies that get too close.

You start out right in the thick of the action, and most of the 'Mechs you'll face in this mission will come to you—not the reverse. If you can survive the prolonged initial onslaught on your starting position, you've all but won the mission.

Be sure to continue targeting enemies' legs. It's difficult to do this when you're using long-range weapons, but if you aim for the body, it'll take longer to kill your foes *and* you'll cut down on salvage. In fact, you might want to be especially careful to target the legs of 'Mechs you're interested in salvaging—you can afford to be a little less careful with those you don't plan on keeping.

Your enemies are as follows:

- 3 Autocannon turrets
- 2 Champions
- 2 Mad Cats
- 1 Annihilator
- 2 Supernovas
- 1 Daishi

STRATEGY

You start out in view of a pair of Autocannon turrets. Destroy both immediately and then walk slightly north from your starting point—just enough to separate yourself a bit from the MFBs. Also, order the MFBs to deploy near their starting position.

A Champion will soon appear in the east, followed shortly by a Mad Cat from the north, and then a second Mad Cat. Shoot at the Champion and send your lancemates off to attack it. When the first Mad Cat appears on radar, turn your attention to it instead, attacking it from long range. If you're lucky, your lancemates will soon finish off the Champion and can be ordered to attack a Mad Cat.

Try to get in as many shots from long range as possible as you fight, and don't forget to aim for legs. Don't bother running around too much; just rely on your lancemates and your long-range firepower to help you.

When the Mad Cats close to medium range, use your mid-range weapon group to finish them off.

If any of your 'Mechs are severely damaged, you might be able to have the MFBs repair them now. You should have just enough time to repair one 'Mech before an Annihilator appears from the north.

Attack the Annihilator from long range; don't approach it (Figure 10-3)! Don't order your lancemates to approach it either; just hang back and blast at it with PPCs and other long-range weapons.

Figure 10-3. Destroy the Annihilator from long range.

A Champion will appear from the northwest as you fight the Annihilator, but it'll remain on the other side of the river. A Supernova also will appear near the Champion, and it too will remain on the other side of the river. Ignore both 'Mechs for now, as the hill at Point Able will protect you from their fire.

When the Annihilator is gone, repair any damaged 'Mechs in the MFBs. Meanwhile, the Champion and Supernova will mill around to the northwest, but they won't attack your position.

When your 'Mechs are all fully repaired, move to the vicinity of Point 1, where you can see the enemy 'Mechs across the river. Gun them down from long range.

Repair your 'Mechs once again, then cross the river near Point 1. Proceed west toward Point Baker, taking the path indicated on the Battle Map. Stop when a Supernova appears to the northwest, and gun it down with long-range fire.

When the Supernova's gone, start moving again. A Daishi will soon appear in the west. Again, fight it from long range; it's recommended that you back up while fighting to keep it away from you. Don't order your lancemates to attack; just let them shoot from where they are. Try to shoot a leg, not the body, because the Daishi makes good salvage.

When the Daishi is gone, proceed to Point Baker and destroy the laser tower there (Figure 10-4). Then return to Point Able, where there's a village on a hillside (Figure 10-5). Destroy every house in the village.

Figure 10-4. Blast the laser tower.

Your objectives are now completed. Exit the mission area.

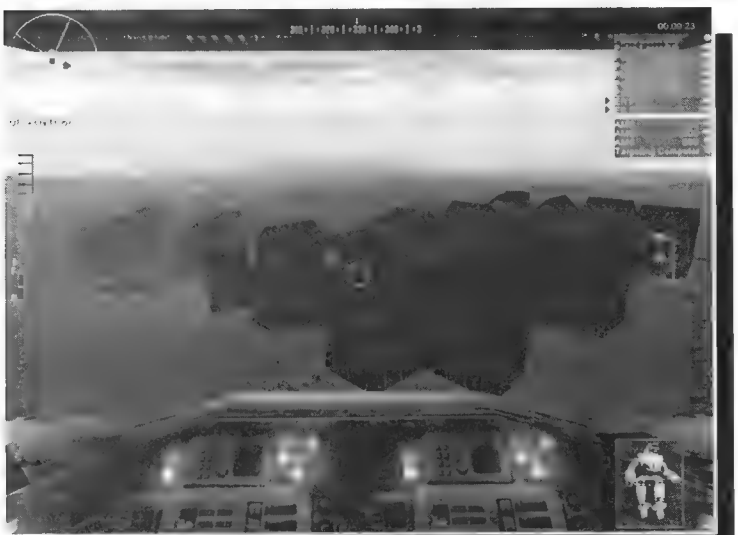
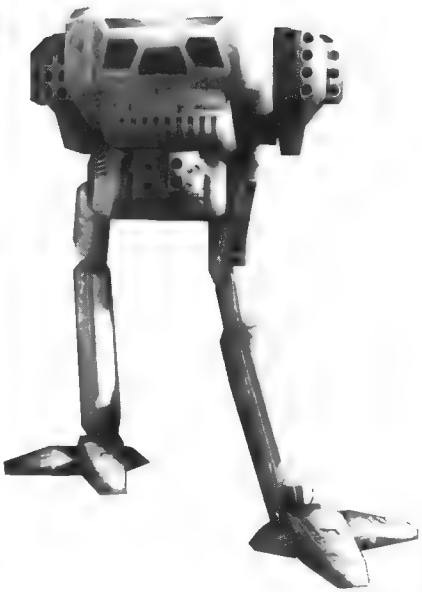
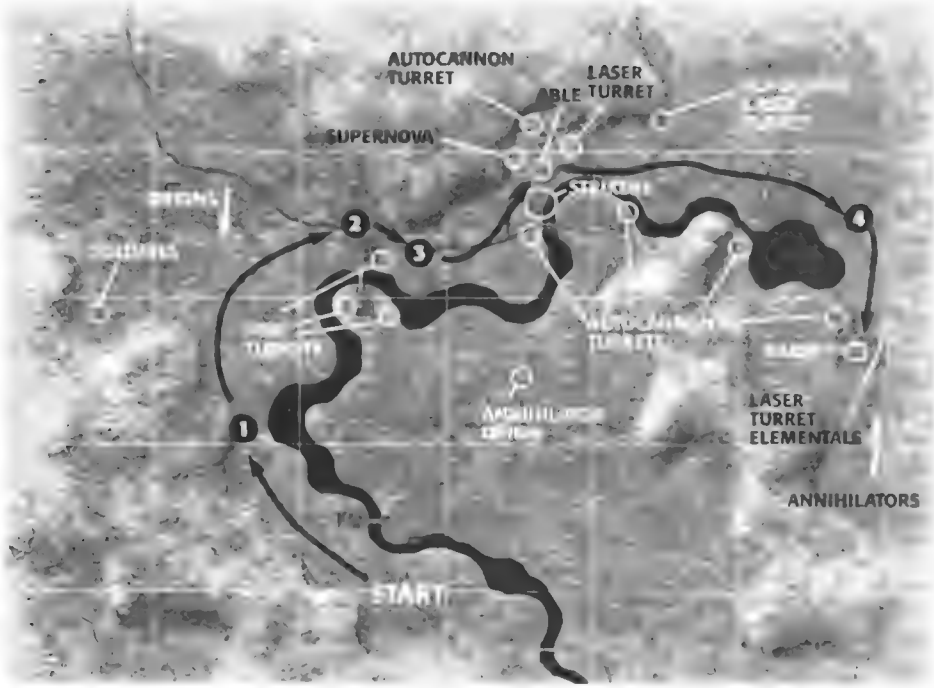


Figure 10-5. Destroy every house in the village.



MISSION 3

BATTLE MAP



This mission requires lots of patience. With this, plus a battery of long-range weapons, you can gradually move through this mission and incur relatively little risk. Blasting through it full speed, on the other hand, is a dangerous proposition.

You're tasked with capturing both a supply depot and a shuttle pad; in practice, this just means destroying all resistance near each structure.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Capture supply depot at Point Able (Primary)
- Capture shuttle pad at Point Baker (Primary)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

This mission features a vast array of turrets and numerous enemies that tend to stay in place instead of charging out to meet you. Add these elements together and you'll see why this is an excellent mission for heavy 'Mechs armed with long-range weapons. With long-range weapons you can pick off both turrets and mobile threats from afar, and not incur the risks of fighting them up close.

The basic pattern of this mission is to advance only far enough to get a clean shot at an enemy, destroy that enemy with long-range fire, and retreat to the MFBs for repairs. Repeat as many times as necessary. You shouldn't have many problems as long as you strictly adhere to this winning formula.

Your enemies include:

- 3 SRM turrets
- 2 Vultures
- 3 Orions
- 2 Supernovas
- 3 laser turrets
- 5 Autocannon turrets
- 5 Elementals
- 3 Annihilators
- 4 Strikers

STRATEGY

You start out on the west bank of a river. Immediately start moving northwest toward Point 1.

Along the way, two SRM turrets guarding a bridge to the northeast will become visible. Take them out with long-range fire.

Continue to advance slowly north toward Point 1. When you near Point 1, a pair of Vultures will power up to the northwest. Immediately backtrack, and fight the Vultures with your long-range weapons as soon as they enter your field of view.

As you fight the Vultures, perhaps retreating as you do so, a pair of Orions will march down from the north and join the fray. Again, maintain long range as long as possible. You can either order your lancemates to attack or just let them remain by your side to lend fire support.

When the enemy is cleared out, repair your 'Mechs at the MFBs' starting position, then move along to Point 2 (Figure 10-6).

Figure 10-6. Point 2 lies slightly north of this bridge and collection of small buildings.

TIP

Your enemies will tend to remain in the north and not follow you too far, so it shouldn't be hard to fight them from long range.

At Point 2, you'll pick up multiple contacts on your radar. There are four Strikers, several turrets, and two Supernovas all stationed near Point Able. There's also a pair of heavy 'Mechs to the southeast: an Annihilator and an Orion. All of these enemies tend to remain near their starting points and won't charge out too far toward your forces.

Move forward to Point 3, where you'll be able to get periodic shots at the Strikers to the east, and the Annihilator and Orion to the southeast. Pick away at these enemies, meanwhile summoning the MFBs to Point 2 for convenient repairs.

Pick away at the enemies you can see, meanwhile trying not to advance so far that the Supernovas at Point Able can get a direct shot at you.

Eventually, if you're patient, you can destroy both large 'Mechs to the southeast, plus some of the Strikers. When you've accomplished this, repair again (if necessary) and move slightly east of Point 3. Shoot new enemies as they come into view, and retreat if you reveal too many enemies at once, or if the Supernovas come after you.

TIP

Theoretically, you could ignore the Annihilator and Orion to the southeast, especially if you destroy the bridges that would allow them to approach you. However, we recommend destroying them for the sake of salvage and completeness.

In this methodical fashion, you should be able to clear out all enemies from Point Able. You'll assume control of the supply depot when all enemies are destroyed (Figure 10-7).

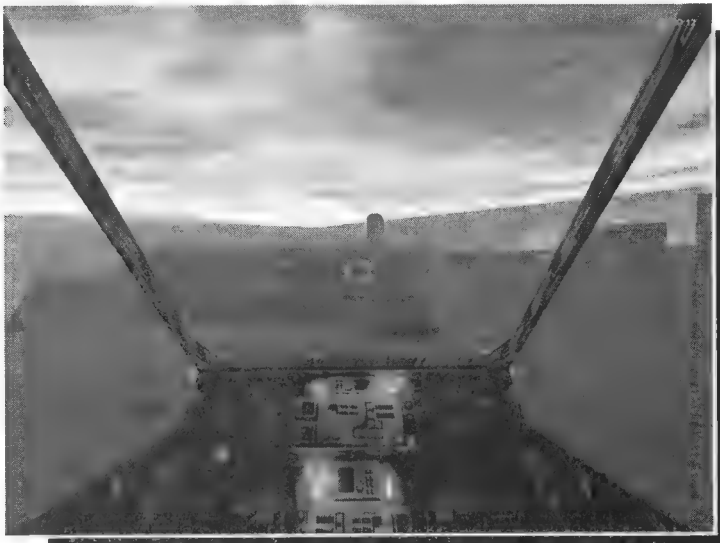


Figure 10-7. When all enemies are destroyed, the supply depot is yours.

Figure 10-8. Use these abandoned buildings for cover.

Now, repair again at the MFBs and proceed east from Point Able, following the path on the Battle Map. Destroy turrets as you proceed toward Point 4.

When you enter the vicinity of Point 4, which is populated with abandoned high rises (Figure 10-8), a party of Elementals will emerge from the vicinity of Point Baker. Use the high rises for protection and let the Elementals come to you.

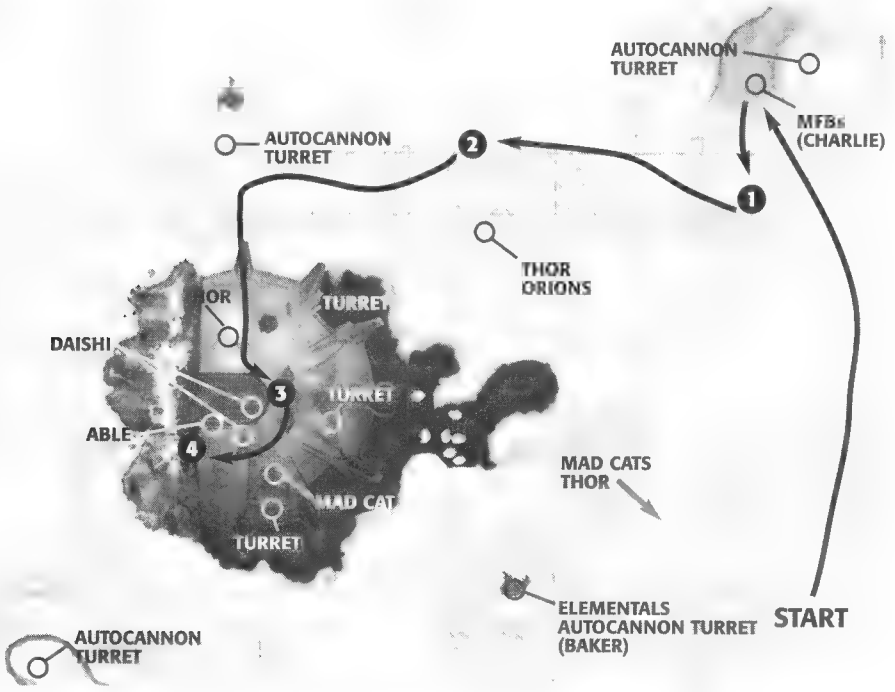
When the Elementals have been destroyed, slowly advance on Point Baker, taking out any remaining turrets. As you approach Point Baker, the shuttlecraft you'd hoped to commandeer will rise up from the pad and fly away. A pair of Annihilators also will appear from the south.

Retreat as you fight the Annihilators, staying well away from their potent medium-range weapons. If you keep your distance, destroying both should be a relatively easy matter.

When all enemies in the vicinity are gone, you'll assume control of the shuttle pad at Baker. The mission is a success.

MISSION 4

BATTLE MAP



This tough mission requires patience and good aim. You must take down a massive Smoke Jaguar fortress. You have no weapons capable of scratching the massive walls of the fortress, but you *can* effectively destroy it by entering it and destroying a generator, thus cutting off power. Without power, the fortress is rendered useless because heat is needed in this inhospitable climate.

Follow the walkthrough in the Strategy section carefully, and you'll have a much easier time beating the mission. But even with that assistance, you may have to try the mission more than once.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Disable Clan fortress at Point Able (Primary)
- Capture warehouse at Point Baker (Secondary)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

As usual, this mission calls for heavy 'Mechs with potent long-range attacks. Also, we recommend that your own 'Mech carry long-range weapons and a battery of medium-range weapons. We used an Annihilator with an oversized engine, three Clan Large ER Lasers, and seven Clan Medium Pulse Lasers. Our three lancemates piloted a Sunder, a Mad Cat, and a second Annihilator with an oversized engine. All lancemates had Clan Large ER Lasers or Clan ER-PPCs.

The key to this mission is to survive the initial Smoke Jaguar onslaught, then dash for cover in an ice cave where your MFBs are parked. Unlike other missions, the MFBs aren't particularly mobile in this mission and they don't start out near you. Thus, your first priority will be to get to the MFBs and repair. After that, the mission—although not easy—is definitely more manageable.

Your enemies include:

- 3 Mad Cats
- 3 Thors
- 2 Orions
- 4 Autocannon turrets
- 3 laser turrets
- 2 Daishi
- 3 Elementals
- 3 Donars

STRATEGY

You start out on an icy plain. Several Elementals are running around to the west, but ignore them for now; they won't bother you if you don't approach them.

A Thor and two Mad Cats will soon rush toward you from the direction of the fortress; blast them with long-range fire, then medium-range fire when they get close. Order your lancemates to attack them when they get close. Try not to approach Point Baker during the fight.

After this tough fight, proceed north along the path shown on the Battle Map. Your destination is Point Charlie. As you proceed toward Point Charlie, you'll notice an Autocannon turret to the north. Destroy it.

As you continue toward Point Charlie, you'll also notice a Thor and a pair of Orions off to the west. You may fire at them, but don't slow down; keep moving toward Point Charlie.

TIP

A trio of Donar helicopters may pester you at any point from here on out. Quickly destroy the Donars with laser fire when and if they show up.

When you reach Point Charlie, you'll find your MFBs (Figure 10-9). They're sequestered in a sheltered area, between icy ridges. You'll be safe from the Thor and Orions when you get there; you're protected by a ridge, and the enemy won't approach close enough to get an angle for a shot.

Figure 10-9. Repair your 'Mechs thoroughly before moving on.

Fully repair all your 'Mechs. When repairs are done, proceed south to Point 1. You'll come into view of the Thor and Orions to the west. Pick away at them with long-range fire, never straying too far from Point 1. The Thor and Orions won't approach you beyond a certain point, so your long-range weapons should have the advantage.

After dispatching the Thor and Orions, fully repair all your 'Mechs again.

Now proceed west from Point 1, along the path to Point 2. As you approach Point 2, you'll see an Autocannon turret to the west. Destroy it with long-range fire.

Near Point 2, you'll see a Thor walking around on the surface of the Smoke Jaguar fortress (Figure 10-10). Stop here and destroy it with your long-range weapons; it won't leave the fortress, so the battle will take place entirely at long range.

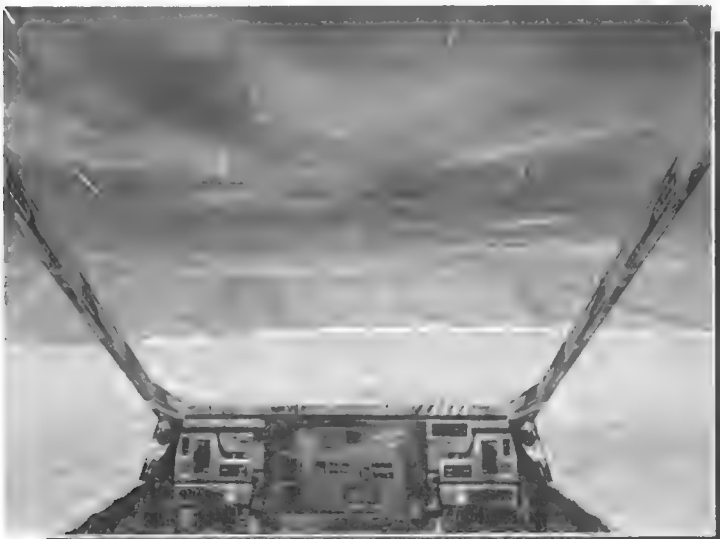


Figure 10-10. The fortress, seen from a short distance.

There's another 'Mech walking around on top of the fortress—a Mad Cat—but you can't see it from here.

Walk along the path shown on the Battle Map, up to Point 3. Take it slowly. You'll have to walk up a ramp that leads up to the top of the fortress.

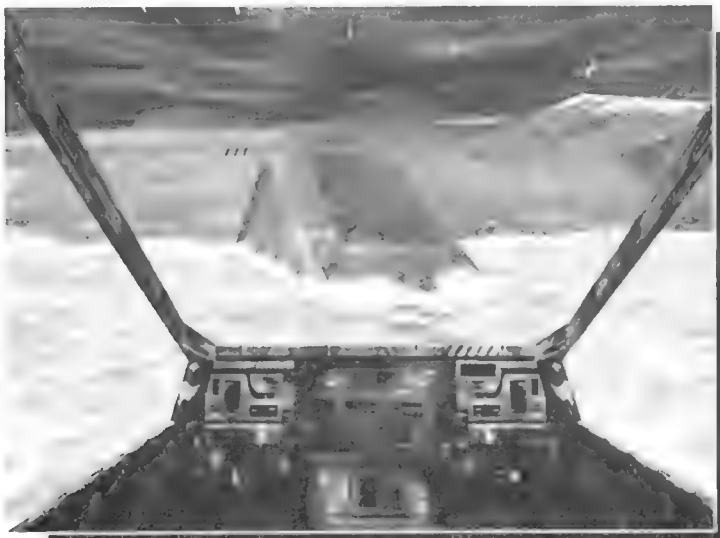
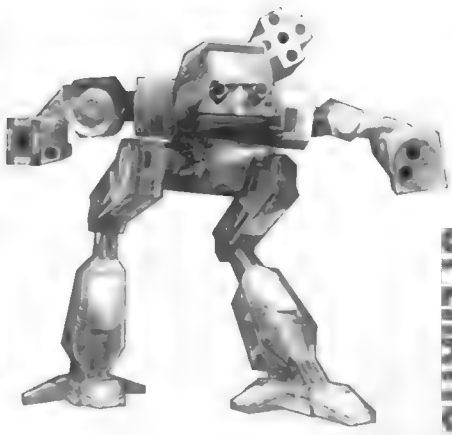


Figure 10-11. Climb this ramp up to the top of the fortress.

TIP

Watch out for the three turrets atop the fortress. Destroy them as soon as they become visible.



TIP

If you're paying attention to the Battle Map, you're probably concerned about the fact that you're walking so close to a pair of Daishi. Never fear! The Daishi are actually inside the fortress, whereas you're going to walk atop it. They won't be able to see you as you move to Point 3, nor will they move to attack.

However, there's a ramp atop the fortress that leads down to the place where the Daishi are. You might want to order your lancemates to remain at the base of the fortress instead of letting them follow you, as they have a tendency to wander down this ramp and get blasted by the Daishi.

TIP

If the Daishi manage to knock you down or blast your armor down to dangerous levels, get back up and immediately backtrack until they can't see you. Return to the MFBs for repairs, then return here and finish them off. The Daishi have potent weapons, but they're essentially fish in a barrel; you can attack them whenever you like, and they won't follow you.

Atop the fortress, continue to follow the path to Point 3. At Point 3, you'll come into view of the Mad Cat; destroy it quickly with leg shots.

After destroying the Mad Cat, slowly proceed to Point 4. Point 4 is located on an icy ridge that adjoins the back of the fortress.

TIP

If you're seriously damaged at this point, you should backtrack all the way to the MFBs for repairs. It's a bother, but it'll help keep you alive.

From Point 4, you can look down upon the pair of Daishi waiting inside the fortress (Figure 10-12). They're well below you, so they'll be slow to aim at you. Stand near Point 4 and blast them with a steady stream of laser fire, concentrating on leg shots if possible.

Figure 10-12. Destroy the Daishi from the icy ridge.

When the Daishi are gone, drop down into the arena-like area where they were standing. Here you'll see the generator that powers the fortress (Figure 10-13). Destroy the generator to complete your primary objective.

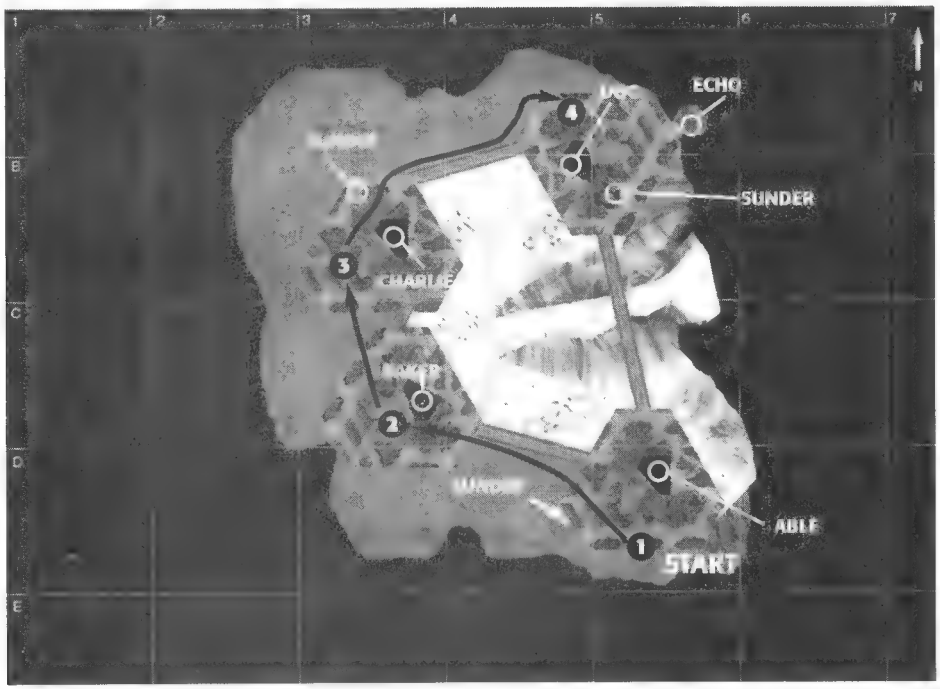
Figure 10-13. Drop down to where the Daishi were, and destroy the generator.

Climb up a ramp that leads back to the top of the fortress, then backtrack along the path you took to reach the fortress, all the way to Point 1. If you need repairs, get them now.

At this point, you can complete your mission's secondary objective by approaching Point Baker and destroying the three Elementals and single Autocannon turret guarding the warehouse. Exit the mission when both of your goals are complete.

MISSION 5

BATTLE MAP



This is a solo mission that takes you through a Smoke Jaguar geothermal plant. Your mission is to destroy the plant by taking out four core taps.

The plant is located in a large cavern with pools of lava at the bottom. The cavern is filled with numerous Elementals and three Sunders. The Sunders are (obviously) your main threat.

You'll be on your own for this one, with no lancemates. However, this shouldn't be a difficult mission if you take a 100-ton 'Mech and load it with the right weapons.

Your objectives are as follows:

- Destroy core tap at Point Able (Primary)
- Destroy core tap at Point Baker (Primary)
- Destroy core tap at Point Charlie (Primary)
- Destroy core tap at Point Dog (Primary)
- Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Primary)
- Escape through elevator at Point Echo (Final)

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

Take a 100-ton 'Mech with all medium-range weapons; a group of 10 to 12 Clan Medium Pulse Lasers plus lots of heat sinks should do nicely. Don't worry about speed; it's not a major issue in this mission.

You can follow the walkthrough in the Strategy section closely, or just skim through it and do the mission on your own. This mission is simple, and the keys to success can be boiled down to a few basic points: Don't let all three Sunders see you at the same time, destroy all enemies before taking out the core taps, and try not to fall into the lava.

The Elementals that are scattered throughout the mission area aren't noted on the Battle Map. They're so mobile that it would be misleading to mark their locations; they'd almost never be where the map said they'd be.

Your enemies include:

- 3 Sunders
- 10 Elementals

STRATEGY

You start out in a partially shielded section of the cavern. As you can see from the Battle Map, the cavern is roughly C-shaped, with lava in the middle of the "C" (Figure 10-14).

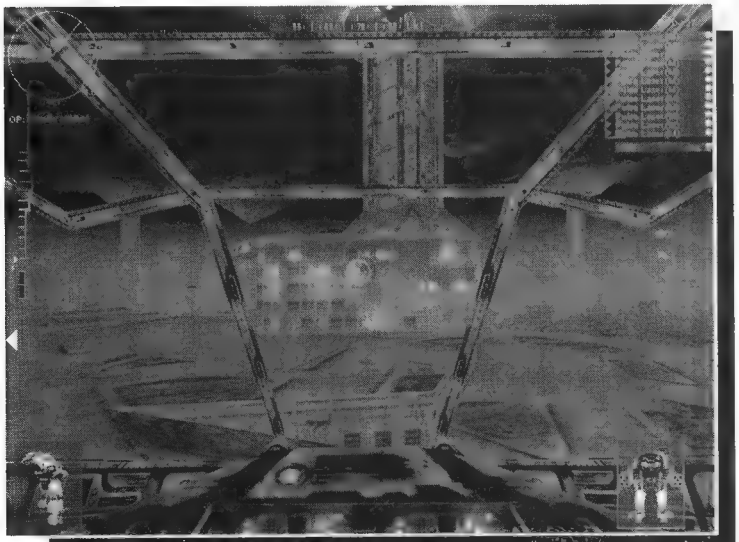


Figure 10-14. A view of the cavern.

Your radar will show you that there are Elementals swarming throughout the cavern. Just stand in place for now, and shoot any Elementals that come into view.

Within a few seconds, a Sunder will run toward you from the west. Target it as soon as it appears, and chisel off a leg with concentrated fire. When it's down, go back to shooting Elementals. (You'll probably only be able to shoot two or three Elementals from your current position.)

When all Elementals visible from your starting position are gone, you should cycle through your radar contacts with the map enabled, and locate the position of the two remaining Sunders on the map. They're your biggest remaining threats.

Make a dash to Point 2 along the path indicated on the Battle Map. Shoot Elementals as you go, but don't slow down until you reach Point 2.

TIP

Depending on where the Sunders are, you could sneak ahead slightly (to Point 1) until one of them comes into view, then destroy it from near your current position. However, because your weapons have limited range and because both Sunders may be in a position to see you simultaneously, the walk-through provides a different alternative.

At Point 2 are more Elementals. Destroy them.

When you've cleaned up the Elementals from this area, dash north to Point 3 and destroy the Sunder there if you haven't already. Also destroy any Elementals in this area.

Finally, dash east to Point 4. Destroy the Sunder there, and clean up any remaining Elementals.

With all enemies now cleared from the cavern, you can start shooting core taps (Figure 10-15). Destroy the core taps at Able, Baker, Charlie, and Dog. (The core taps look like lava-filled columns.)

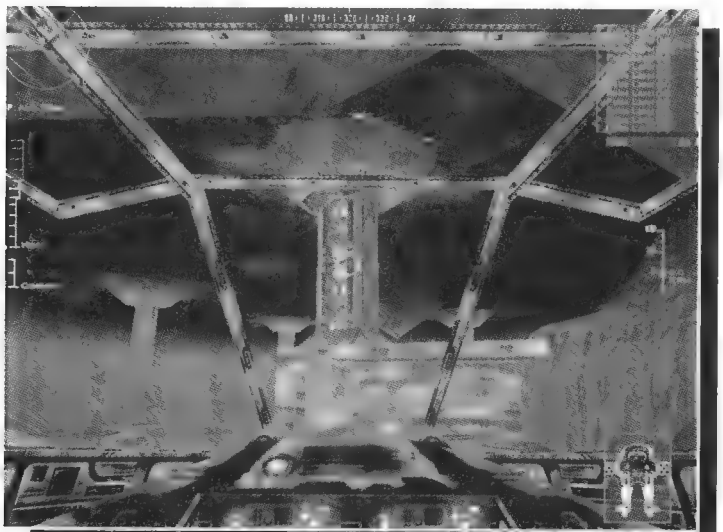


Figure 10-15. Destroy the core taps.

After all four core taps are destroyed, proceed to Point Echo. As you approach a pair of doors, they'll open (Figure 10-16). Walk inside to end the mission.

TIP

Don't take the manmade bridge to Point 2; it's prone to collapse. Run along the rock beside the bridge, as shown on the Battle Map.

TIP

While you stand at Point 2, you'll be shielded from the Sunder near Point 4, but you may be able to see the Sunder near Point 3. If so, gun it down from here before dealing with the Elementals.

If the Sunder at Point 3 is shooting at you but your weapons won't reach it, advance to Point 3 and kill it there.

The most likely case, however, is that neither Sunder will be in a position to shoot you while you're at Point 2. If that's the case, just shoot all Elementals near Point 2.

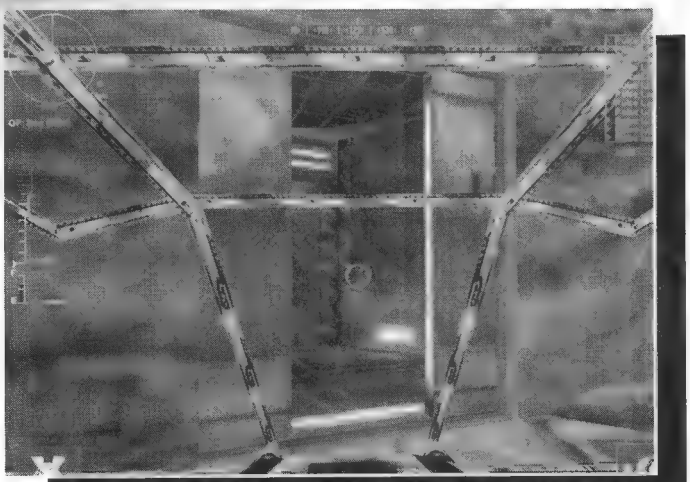
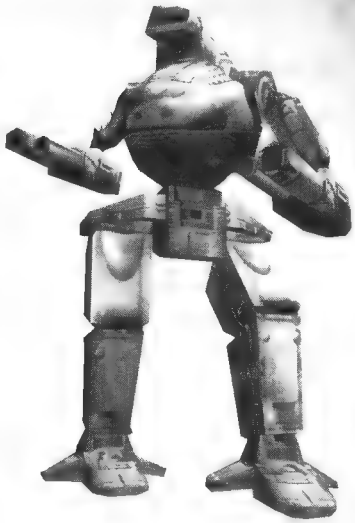
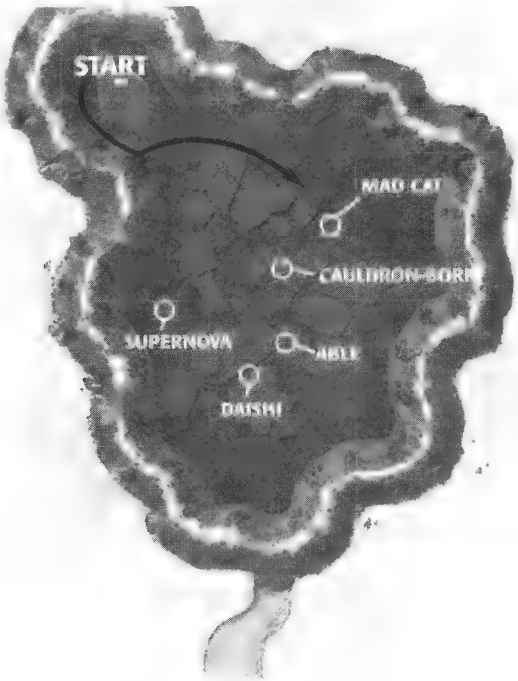


Figure 10-16. Walk through these doors to end the mission.



MISSION 6

BATTLE MAP



This is it: The culmination of your strike against Brendan Corbitt. It's actually a very simple mission, at least in theory. Your four BattleMechs will battle four Smoke Jaguar BattleMechs inside a caldera. It's a straightforward fight to the death, and if you win, your campaign is a complete success.

You have only one objective:

- **Destroy Smoke Jaguar forces (Primary)**

INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING

The battle takes place in a caldera (a drained volcanic lake). Essentially, it's an empty arena. You start the mission in a sheltered area on the northwest edge of the caldera, but you can't remain there or else the Jaguars will destroy your shuttlecraft. Thus, you must charge out into the open field to fight.

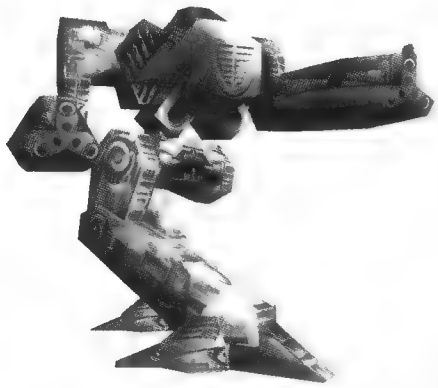
The caldera has several slightly raised plates, which appear on the Battle Map as lighter spots against the largely dark floor of the caldera. You should avoid these plates initially, as your 'Mech's feet will tend to get snagged on them. Optionally, you could use jump jets to travel through the arena—but they're not necessary.

Equip yourself and your lancemates with heavy BattleMechs. Take medium-range weapons for yourself, such as a group of 10 to 12 Clan Medium Pulse Lasers and lots of heat sinks. Don't bother with long-range weapons, as you won't be able to hang back during this fight. Give your lancemates reasonably long-range weapons, and also some accurate medium-range weapons like Medium Pulse Lasers and Streak SRM 6s.

Despite the skill of the enemy MechWarriors, you should be able to win this battle without too much trouble. Your 'Mechs should outweigh those of the enemy, and your ability to chisel off a 'Mech's leg in mere seconds with your group-fired Medium Pulse Lasers should make the difference.

Your enemies include:

- **1 Mad Cat**
- **1 Supernova**
- **1 Cauldron-Born**
- **1 Daishi**



STRATEGY

This mission is purely about combat. As the mission starts, select your main weapon group and lead your companions along the path shown on the Battle Map. This path takes you away from your sheltered alcove, and out into the open (Figure 10-17).

Figure 10-17. You'll have to leave this sheltered area immediately.

As you walk into the open, you'll see the four Smoke Jaguar 'Mechs waiting for you: a Supernova, a Mad Cat, a Cauldron-Born, and a Daishi containing Brendan Corbitt.

You should immediately have your lancemates attack a target when the enemy comes into view. Have them all attack the same target, preferably the Cauldron-Born. You should attack a separate target—preferably, the Mad Cat.

The path drawn on the Battle Map is recommended because it causes you to move laterally in relation to the enemies, thus helping you avoid their fire. It also steers you clear of the numerous, slightly elevated plates on the ground. (You can see them on the Battle Map; they're the areas that are slightly lighter than the surrounding ground.) These plates are just tall enough to halt your 'Mech's forward progress, so at least initially you'll want to steer clear of them.

Once you've destroyed the Mad Cat, you'll want to turn your attention to the Supernova or the Daishi. If you took long-range weapons, you can try to maintain long range, but if you took a medium-range weapon group (as we recommended), you should charge in at an angle, picking your way through the elevated plates on the ground and group-firing your weapons at enemies' legs (Figure 10-18).

Figure 10-18. Group-firing your weapons at your enemies' legs, as always, will result in quick kills.

If you fail, there's not much recourse except to try again and try to fight better: Aim more precisely, always target legs, keep moving, use your lancemates, and don't get stuck on those pesky plates on the ground. These are basic combat skills, which you've honed throughout the missions leading up to this one. They'll serve you well now.

You win the mission when all four Smoke Jaguars are defeated.

CHAPTER 11
MULTIPLAYER TIPS

IT'S DIFFICULT TO ADVISE you on multiplayer games, because they're highly unpredictable environments. With so many potential variations in rules and play styles, we can't give you a simple recipe for success. What we *can* provide, however, are general guidelines for improving your game. Success is still largely up to your individual skills, but we can provide you a sense of what to expect and how to improve. The rest is up to you—and will come only with experience.

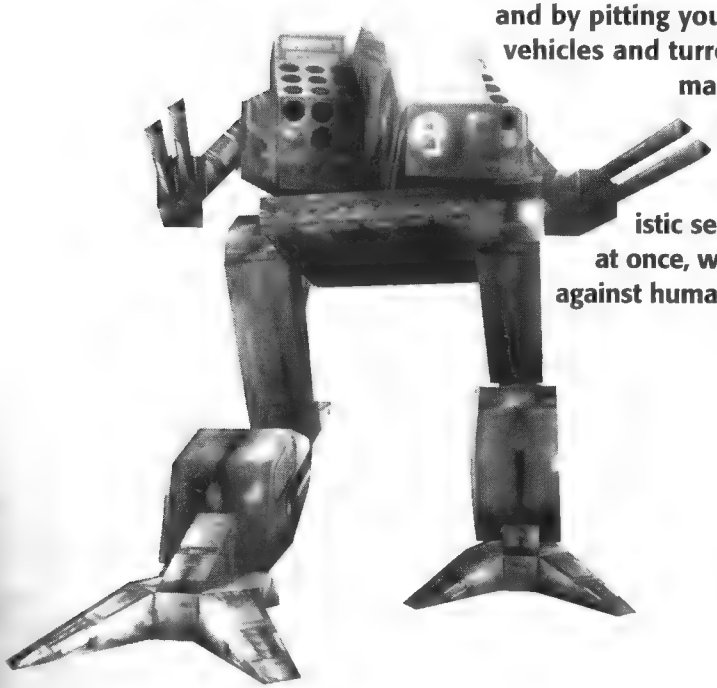
WHAT TO EXPECT

If you're used to single-player games, your first few attempts at multiplayer can be a rude awakening. Multiplayer games are very different in pace and character from single-player missions, and they require a somewhat different set of skills than single-player missions. Here's a look at what to expect when you start playing against fellow humans.

EXPECT PROFICIENCY

The first thing to expect is skill. If you're playing with friends, then you probably have a good idea what you're getting into. But if you're playing online, or against people you aren't that familiar with, you can expect a fairly high level of play. People gravitate toward games they're good at, and good players tend to play frequently because they like the feeling of winning. Thus, as you play online, you're likely to encounter skilled players.

Expect this high level of play, and expect to take a while to adjust. If you start playing multiplayer games and expect to win as consistently as you did in the single-player campaign, you'll have a rough time. Single-player missions skew battles in your favor by providing you (but not your enemies) with MFBs, and by pitting you against multiple small enemies (like vehicles and turrets) rather than a few heavy hitters. Also, many Smoke Jaguar pilots you'll face in the single-player game aren't particularly good shots.



All these factors can give you an unrealistic sense of how many enemies you can take on at once, which you'll have to revise as you play against human enemies.

EXPECT A FEW TOUGH ENEMIES

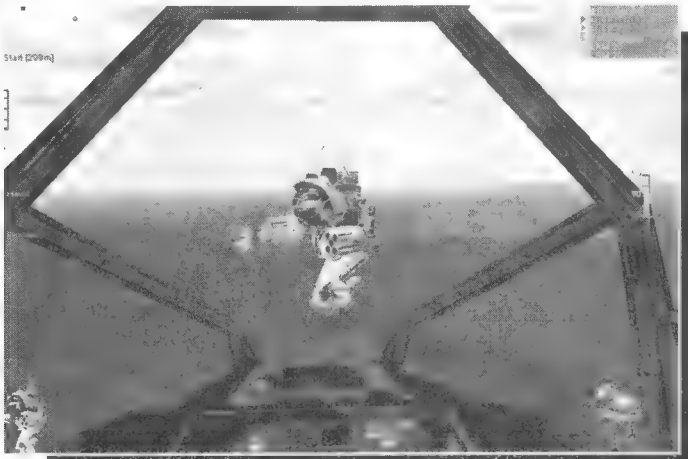


Figure 11-1. A few tough enemies, like this Daishi, are common in multiplayer—as opposed to the small vehicles and turrets found in single-player missions.

You should expect fewer enemies in multiplayer games than in single-player missions, but these enemies will be significantly harder to kill than foes in single-player missions. Your enemies have chosen 'Mechs that suit their style of play, customized these 'Mechs exactly the way they want them, and will pilot the 'Mechs in a way that plays to their strengths.

In single-player games, you'll occasionally notice the computer-controlled enemy doing something silly, like walking right into an ambush or allowing you to fight them at long range when they're piloting 'Mechs with lots of short-range weapons. This sort of error is less common when you're facing experienced human enemies.

EXPECT SPECIALIZATION

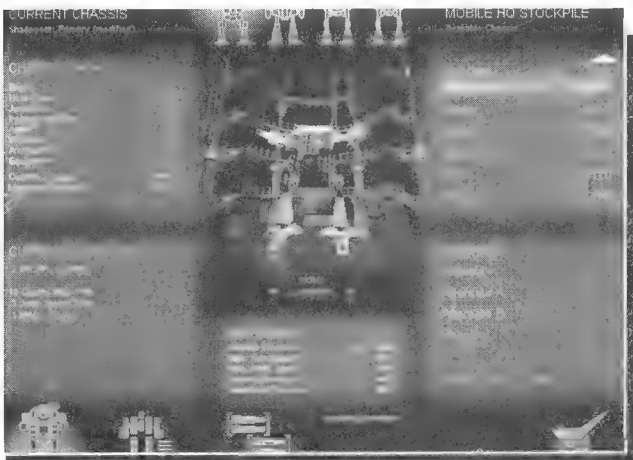


Figure 11-2. This 'Mech, with its high-speed and Clan ER-PPCs, is specialized for long-range, hit-and-run tactics.

Human players understand that they need to deal quick knockout punches before their enemies do the same to them. The easiest way to load up on power is to specialize in a particular range and then fight at that range. A 'Mech sporting weapons for all possible ranges usually won't be able to kill anything quickly at any range. On the other hand, a 'Mech with all

weapons geared toward one range may be limited, but it'll be able to deliver a solid punch at the range it's specialized in.

TIP

As you fight your enemies, try to determine what sort of weapons they're using and, therefore, at what range they'll try to fight. Ideally, you should be able to foil the enemy by getting closer—or farther away—than the range their weapons are geared for.

GAMES VARY WITH PLAYERS

Every game is different because every opponent has a slightly different style of fighting. If you're always playing against strangers, you'll have to develop a general style that's universally effective—but if you always play with the same group, you'll eventually learn each opponent's tendencies.

Whereas games against strangers tend to emphasize fundamental skills and tactics, games between players who are familiar with one another can feature elaborate measures and counter-measures, in which one player may take a particular weapon or system to foil the weapon or system that he knows another player tends to rely upon. For example, if a player always uses missiles, the other players might start to load up on an excessive amount of AMSs to neutralize him. If one player uses ER-PPCs and a Targeting Computer to help with aiming, the others might pick ECM suites to neutralize the Targeting Computer.

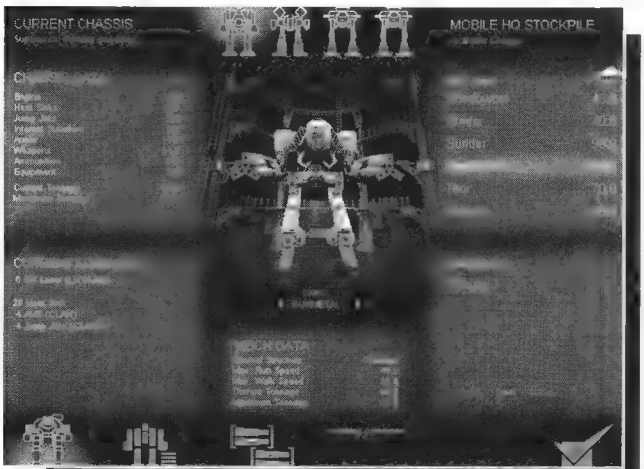
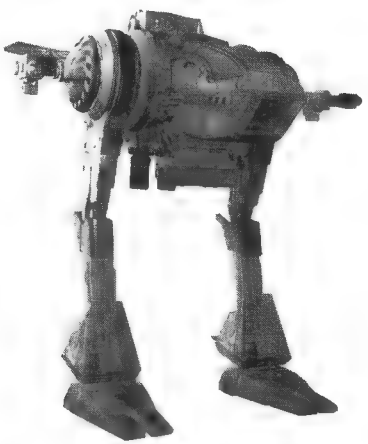


Figure 11-3. This 'Mech, with its four AMSs, is a direct response to a player who always uses lots of missiles.



TRICKERY MATTERS

Trying to deceive or fake out your enemies in the single-player campaign is generally nonproductive; you're better off just trying to kill them outright. In multiplayer games, however, trickery can be of value.

Shutting down your 'Mech is a classic piece of trickery. As you play more and more multiplayer games, you'll realize how much players rely on their radar to locate their foes. Shutting down your 'Mech allows you to effectively hide—especially when you have an ECM suite, which nullifies the effects of the Beagle Active Probe.

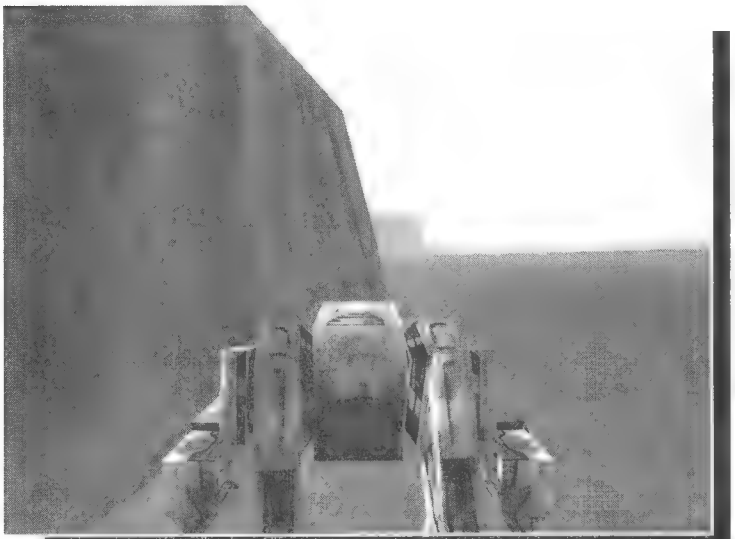


Figure 11-4. This shut-down 'Mech is hard to see on radar.

Hiding isn't too useful in very small games, because your enemies can keep track of you in such environments. But in larger games, you can often hide behind a hill and shut down, then wait for the enemy to wander into view, oblivious to your presence. That's the time to strike.

HOW TO IMPROVE

Now that you know some of the key differences between single-player and multiplayer games, you're probably wondering how to improve in multiplayer. Much of your success will depend on your combat skills and the ability to handle your 'Mech under pressure, both of which will improve with experience. But here are some strategies that will start you in the right direction.

BEAT THE SINGLE-PLAYER CAMPAIGN

Beat the single-player game on at least Medium difficulty before tackling multiplayer. Although some skills from the single-player campaign don't translate to multiplayer, the basics of handling your 'Mech and your weapons are essential.

If you're good enough to beat the single-player game, chances are good that you'll be able to handle multiplayer. If the campaign is difficult for you, on the other hand, keep practicing. You're likely to take a beating in multiplayer until you refine your single-player skills.

UNDERSTAND THE RULES

Just as you should pay close attention to the briefing in single-player missions, you should make an effort to pay attention to the rules of engagement in multiplayer games. Take note of things like the size of the game, teams, and whether MFBs are available.

In a large game, where there are multiple 'Mechs on the battlefield at once, you can play fast and loose, looking for choice opportunities such as enemies so distracted that you can sneak up and finish them off before they notice you. Small games, on the other hand, allow players to keep close track of all enemies at all times, so your chances of netting this type of easy kill diminish. Instead, you'll need to concentrate on sticking to advantageous terrain for your particular 'Mech type, and not making serious tactical mistakes.

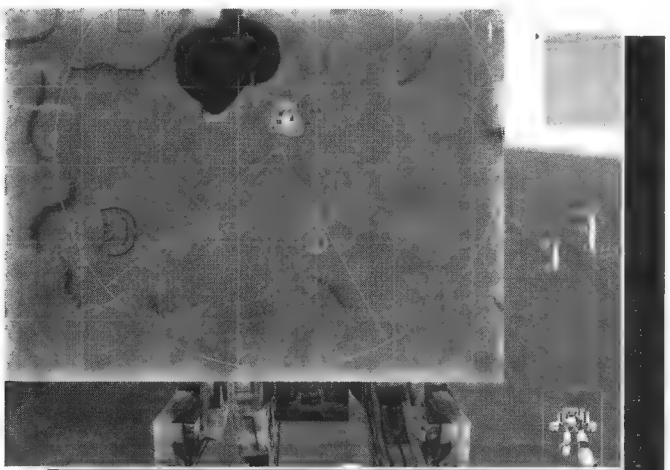


Figure 11-5. With so many 'Mechs on the battlefield at once, you'll be able to sneak around and occasionally surprise someone.

Similarly, a multiplayer game where every player's for themselves must be played differently from a team game. Team games usually require you to stick close to your teammates so you can concentrate your fire. Free-for-all combat allows you to roam and encourages you to stay near the periphery of fights, where you're less likely to take serious damage than in the middle.

A good grasp of the rules, and the implications of those rules, will go a long way toward success.

KNOCKOUT PUNCHES ARE KING

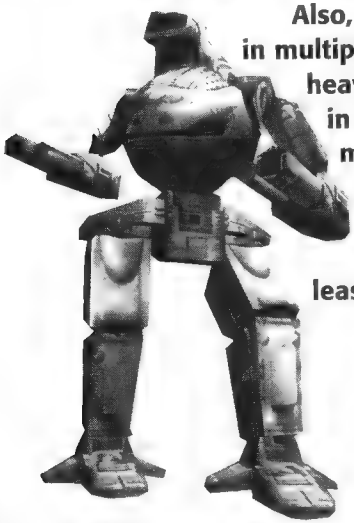
You can't afford to do things halfway in multiplayer games. Use large weapons that deal heavy hits, such as Ultra Autocannon 20s or clusters of weapons that can be group-fired for excellent damage (such as massive groups of Medium Lasers). Slow-acting or imprecise weapons won't get you very far.

Recommended multiplayer weapons include heavy Autocannons, Clan ER-PPCs, large groups of Medium Lasers or Medium Pulse Lasers, Gauss Rifles, and large groups of Flamers. Flamers can be particularly effective at short range, but you need to have a 'Mech with lots of heat sinks and you need to use at least five of them simultaneously.

Not recommended are any small weapons that aren't clustered in large groups and heavy-tonnage, low-damage weapons like Autocannon 2s.

TAKE FAST, EFFICIENT 'MECHS

You want your 'Mech to be in top shape when you play in a multiplayer game. Read Chapter 4 and follow the instructions on maximizing the use of tonnage and critical spaces so that nothing is wasted.



Also, realize that speed is important in multiplayer games. An Annihilator is heavily armored, but it's slow—and in a multiplayer game, your enemies will be so well armed that they can tear through your leg or torso in just a few moments. It's important, therefore, to have enough speed to make at least *some* enemies miss.

TIP

This Mad Cat has a potent combination of high tonnage and high speed. Strive to use 'Mechs of this caliber in multiplayer games.

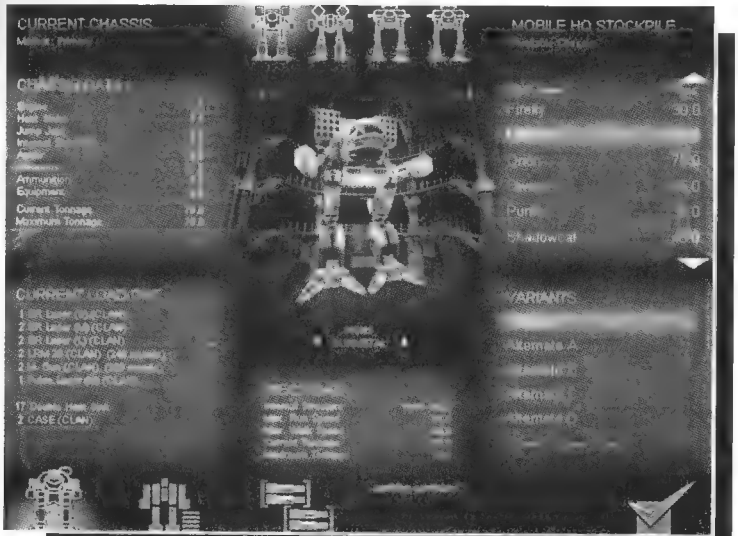


Figure 11-6. The Madcat's combination of speed and tonnage is ideal for multiplayer games.

You also may want to add jump jets to your 'Mech. Jump jets are extremely useful for getting out of a pinch in multiplayer games—especially when you're in a crowd and multiple enemies are targeting you. Jumping makes you very hard to hit. Plus, in a free-for-all environment, many opponents will simply stop targeting a jumping opponent and instead go after land-based enemies that are easier to hit. Finally, you'll probably want a 'Mech that can torso twist. Always select 'Mechs that are capable of torso twisting, then locking the targeting reticule to the center of the screen. (Do this by selecting the default mouse and keyboard configuration under Options, then pressing Ctrl + Number pad 0 simultaneously while in the game.) This allows you to freely rotate the 'Mech's torso just by moving the mouse, thus allowing easy circle fighting.

DISTRACTION IS ESSENTIAL

When playing multiplayer games, be an opportunist. Because both your 'Mech and your opponents' are likely to be armed so heavily that a split second can make the difference in battle, any distraction you can capitalize on is good. Approach two enemies that are fighting and pick on one of them while he's distracted. Leap out from behind obstacles when your target is situated between several enemies; he's likely to be concerned about threats other than you, so he may not be aware of you.

Figure 11-7. Foes that are distracted, either by your lancemates or by another enemy, are easy marks.

Pay attention to the direction your enemies are facing. When you target them, the target display shows you what direction they're looking in relation to you. Use this information to your advantage, initiating the attack when your opponent is looking away.

MINIMIZE ENEMIES

One principle from the single-player campaign that holds true in multiplayer is that you should try to fight only one enemy at once. Moreover, you should try to put yourself in situations where you're likely to be undisturbed while you fight. Having a third party charge in and attack you while you're concentrating on your original enemy is especially lethal and should be avoided at all times.

How can you stay out of multi-party combat? It's not always avoidable, but the most common ways are:

- Try not to get surrounded. If you're surrounded, move at full speed to an area where you aren't.
- Stay near the edge of the map. This naturally prevents you from being surrounded, as enemies can't come in from the edge.
- Don't initiate a fight in a crowded area. If a third party can get a clean shot at you within a few seconds of your initiating a fight, you should run away instead.
- Use large terrain features like steep hills to block enemies on one or more sides.

You'll find that you fight badly when there are multiple targets; there's just too much to deal with. Even just the threat of extra enemies in the vicinity can sometimes distract you enough to make you lose.

TIP

Because massive weapon attacks can cause knockdowns, those split-second advantages really add up. Knock an enemy down while he's not looking, and you'll get lots of free shots at him while he tries to get back up. You should usually be able to finish off a knocked-down opponent before he gets all the way back up.

Remember this principle, and realize that it's merely the flip side of the "Distraction is Essential" tip mentioned earlier. Your foes have just as many problems dealing with multiple targets as you do, so if you can attack them (or just snipe at them from long range) while they're occupied, you'll stand a good chance of winning.

WATCH GOOD PLAYERS

This final suggestion isn't always easy, but it can be extremely valuable: If you get a chance to watch a good player in action, do so. You can learn a lot from this if you actively consider what the player is doing to succeed, and constantly compare it to what you'd have done in the same situation. This is especially valuable if there's one person in your normal play group that consistently beats everyone else. Watch this person and see what he or she does to succeed.

If you can't physically stand near the good player's computer, you can still learn a lot just by being observant in combat. If you keep getting attacked without warning, start watching the radar more and try to figure out where the surprise attacks are coming from. If an enemy with a similar 'Mech keeps gunning you down, pay close attention and try to figure out what he's doing better: Is he moving more? Using jump jets? Using different weapons? You can tell—just by looking at the projectiles in the air—what sort of weapons are being used against you, and then try to use the same weapons in your own 'Mech design.

KEEP PRACTICING

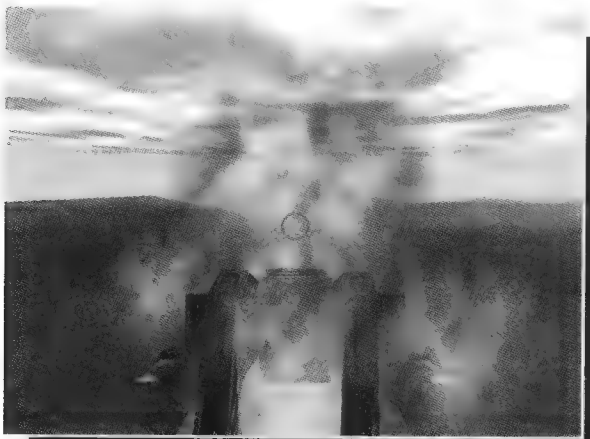


Figure 11-8. Try to figure out what's happening, even when you're getting beaten.

It may seem that you've got the game figured out after a few multiplayer sessions, but there's always something more to learn. These discoveries are often subtle, like the difference between Gauss Rifles and ER-PPCs, or a preference for a particular part of a map. If you continue to play against opponents that are at or slightly above your skill level, and refrain from constantly playing against beginners, you'll be sure to learn more and more as you play.

USING TERRAIN

Use terrain in multiplayer games the same way you'd use it in single-player missions. If your 'Mech is geared toward short-range combat, hide behind large terrain features or obstacles. Place these obstacles between yourself and enemies that are distant, then reveal yourself when the enemy is close. Optionally, remain behind these obstacles and force the enemy to approach you.

If your 'Mech is geared toward long-range combat, on the other hand, you'll want to stay in wide-open spaces that allow you to get a good look at enemies before they get close to you. This will allow you to make the most of your long-range weapons.

Be patient. Unlike single-player missions, where you always have to move to specific places to accomplish specific tasks, you don't have anywhere in particular to go in multiplayer games. Your only objective is to defeat the other side. Therefore, you can afford to pick and choose the spots in which you want to fight. Lurk in areas that are suited to your 'Mech and avoid places that expose its vulnerabilities.

PLAYING WITH TEAMMATES

If you're playing a team game, the main thing to remember is that it's important to stay close to your teammates. If you play regularly with the same group of people, and teams are always the same, you can develop more elaborate strategies, but in most cases, simply sticking together is the only feasible policy. More complicated strategies are likely to fall by the wayside in the heat of combat.

A large group of 'Mechs can chew up a lone enemy 'Mech in seconds. By remaining as a group, your team will have a vast edge on enemies who choose to attack individually.

In addition to sticking together, your team can concentrate all of its firepower on one target at a time. If everybody shoots at one enemy 'Mech simultaneously, it's bound to drop immediately. Conversely, if everyone shoots at different targets, those targets might stick around for awhile. Having the whole group concentrate its fire on one enemy at a time, starting with the heaviest enemy 'Mech and then moving to the lightest, allows you to dispatch enemies quickly and turn the battle in your favor.

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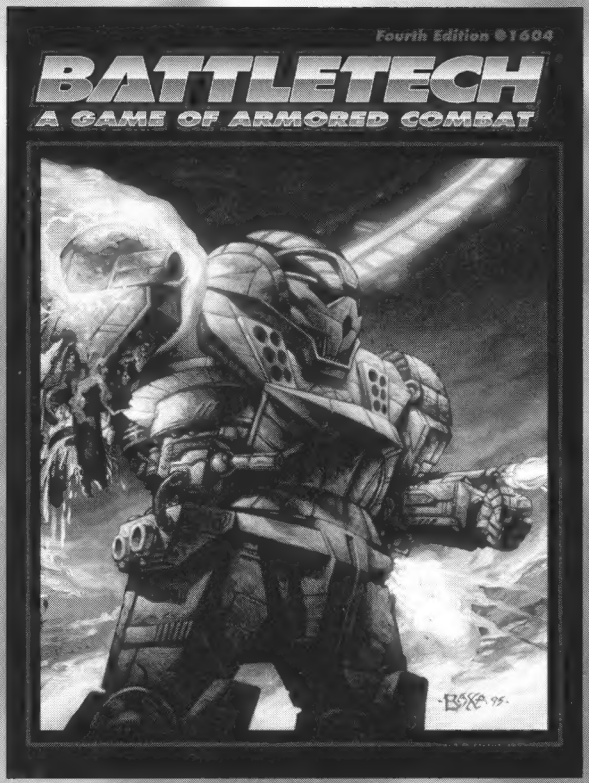

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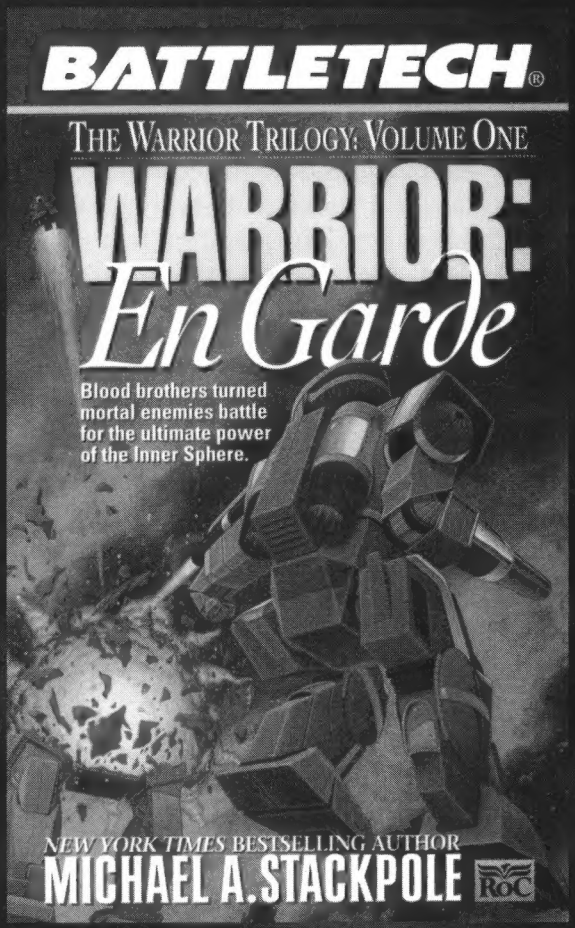
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